TURN ABOUT TALES

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TURN ABOUT TALES

"Mother, Mother," I said, "but she was too far ahead"

(see page 237)

TURN ABOUT TALES

BY

ALICE HEGAN RICE
AND
CALE YOUNG RICE

DENTON TEACHERS COLLEGE
DENTON, TEXAS

77217

NEW YORK
THE CENTURY CO.
1920

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TO

JOHN S. PHILLIPS

WITH THE AFFECTIONATE
ADMIRATION OF TWO
OLD FRIENDS

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BEULAH

By Alice Hegan Rice

BEULAH

MRS. GRIBBEN had been dead all of three weeks, yet Mr. Gribben was still visiting her grave daily and watering it with his tears. This amazing and uncharacteristic behavior on the part of Bentville's leading citizen led to endless conjecture. The charitably inclined argued that perhaps the old skinflint had lavished all the kindness and goodwill which he had withheld from mankind in general on the secluded invalid who had been little more than a name in the community for the past ten years. The more cynical insisted that any man who has to be restrained from leaping into the open grave of one wife is pretty apt to be standing at the altar with another before the year is out.

The only person who could have thrown any light on the situation was Beulah Jones, and Beulah had the Sphinx outclassed in the matter

of reticence. She was a poor relation of the late Mrs. Gribben's, and for many years had borne the domestic burdens of the farm, taken care of the invalid, and served as a sort of lightning-rod that attracted all the prying comments and caustic queries directed at the family, and conducted them safely into oblivion.

The mere sight of her sweeping snow off the Gribbens' porch ought to have been sufficient to discourage anybody from inquiring within about anything. Her face and figure resembled a jig-saw puzzle that had been put together by an amateur. A pair of non-committal eyes of slightly different size and color stood guard over a nose that was really too small to look after itself, and farther south—to be exact, southwest—on her facial map lay a mouth that only opened when it had to, and usually shut in somebody's face. In appearance and action she announced to the world that she was quite prepared to live without it, and she wished the compliment returned.

Notwithstanding these inhospitable signs, the strange lady in the fur coat, struggling up the

road with a suit-case, turned in at the gate.

"Was I given the correct information when I was informed that this was the road to Bentville?" she asked, fixing Beulah with a pair of deep-set, melancholy eyes.

Beulah, after due consideration, evidently saw no reason for denying the fact, and nodded shortly.

"And how much farther is it to the town?" questioned the stranger, pressing a bangled hand to a chained bosom.

"It might be a mile or so," said Beulah.

The lady cast her eyes upward as if calling Heaven to witness her discomfiture. "A mile! Impossible! I wrote the hotel to have a conveyance at the Junction, and nobody was there. I shall have to come in and decide what 's the best thing to do."

Now nobody in the county would have taken such a liberty, but the strange lady swept majestically past Beulah and through the open door.

"Is the lady of the house at home?" she asked.

"I hope so," said Beulah. "She 's in heaven." This remark instead of giving offense, as was intended, awoke a lively interest.

"Really!" said the visitor, taking her seat on the horse-hair sofa and sweeping the comfortable room with an appraising look. "Very recent, I judge, from the wreath over the portrait. An invalid, I see, from the wheel-chair. How sad! Left a husband and children, I suppose?"

The supposition was allowed to remain suspended in mid-air while Beulah savagely brushed up the snow the stranger had tracked in.

"So much sickness and death all over the country," continued the unwelcome guest, fingering the black-bordered notes of condolence that lay on the table near her. "I hope your town has not suffered many such losses."

"No more 'n it could afford," said Beulah.

The visitor observed her with growing disfavor. "I don't suppose you have any way of getting me to town, or of sending for a conveyance to come for me?"

"No," said Beulah, firmly.

"Then," said the stranger, sighing deeply and arising, "I shall be obliged to walk. I shall leave my suit-case here, and send back for it. See that the man gets it when he comes." Then, as she started off the porch, she added, as an afterthought, "By the way, what is the name?"

"Whose name?"

"The name of the—person who lives here?"

Thus cornered, Beulah gave up the secret as a miser parts with gold. For a moment she watched the mysterious figure as it passed down to the road; then she hastened to put up the windows to let out the pungent odor of sandalwood that filled the air. As she moved about she stumbled over the suit-case, and in picking it up noticed the name "Surelle" painted in bold letters on the end of it.

That evening, supper, which of late had been eaten amid encircling gloom, was enlivened by conversation.

"There is to be a seance at the hall to-night at eight-fifteen," announced Mr. Gribben, who always spoke with the frightful solemnity and

dreadful accuracy of one who is under oath.

"A *spirit* seance?" asked Beulah, incredulously.

"Yes; Mrs. Bullock and Miss Wilson saw this woman in Louisville and they claim she can talk with the dead. She has sent me a complimentary ticket for to-night, and I am going."

Beulah's mouth opened and shut twice, but she held her counsel.

"The woman's name is Surelle," continued Mr. Gribben. "Madame Surelle. She 's a writer and a speaker and the president of a society called The International Psychic Seekers. Mrs. Bullock showed me a number of newspaper pieces about her. I am going to see if she can get a message for me from Martha."

Beulah flung herself into the kitchen and brought back a plate of hot biscuits, which she presented at his head as if it had been a pistol. Verbal comment on her part was wholly superfluous. Every twitch of her shoulders expressed scorn, every curl of her lip contempt, for the subject under discussion.

"I shall go with an open mind," announced Mr. Gribben, judiciously balancing his fork on his finger as if it were the scales of justice. "If she proves her claims, I shall uphold her. If she proves an impostor, I shall ruthlessly expose her. She will not be able to fool me."

Beulah watched him don his widower's weeds and start forth in the buggy behind old Kitty to solve the problem of immortality. At eleven o'clock when he returned she was waiting up for him, and she saw at a glance that the verdict was in favor of the spirits. His long, square face with its long, square beard wore a look of mystified elation.

"A most remarkable experience!" he said, pulling up a chair beside hers and warming his hands at the stove. "In less than five minutes after entering the hall I was singled out as the most psychic person present. Before the performance was over I had direct and unmistakable communication with Aunt Maria Blankenbaker!"

"Why wasn't it from Martha?" asked Beulah.

"It was," he announced triumphantly, "a message from her through Aunt Maria. Aunt Maria said Martha had been sick so long before she died that she did n't feel up to coming to a public meeting, but would try to come if I arranged a seance at home."

"That 's funny," Beulah said. "Aunt Maria and Martha must have made up in the other world; they were n't speaking in this one. You surely ain't fixing to have a private meeting?"

"I am. Madame Surelle is going to try to stay over and give me a private seance here tomorrow afternoon."

"Here?" Beulah's voice rose in tragic protest. "Who is coming?"

"Only Madame Surelle and myself, and of course I shall want you to be around somewhere."

"Well, I should hope so!" said Beulah, snatching up a candle and stalking off to bed without so much as a good-night.

The next afternoon Mr. Gribben drove Madame Surelle out from town at the appointed

hour and she and Beulah met as if for the first time.

She was much more imposing than upon the former occasion, being swathed in shabby black velvet and an unmistakable aura of mystery. On her forefinger was a large green scarab, and on her breast a silver swastika. She surveyed the world from her deep-set, tragic eyes from under a coil of black hair that sadly needed renovating. Distributing her wraps impartially about the room, she sighed deeply, as if it were a great effort for her to bring her esoteric mind to bear upon mundane things.

"And now," she said, "I will ask you for a small, light table."

Mr. Gribben looked at Beulah and Beulah looked out of the window.

"I think this one will serve," said Madame, languidly sweeping the family Bible and the tray of condolences on to the floor. "And I should like the shades drawn. We must create an atmosphere, you know. It is a well-known fact that our departed friends are sensitive to heat and light, but impervious

to noises. There—that will do nicely, thank you."

She took her seat with her back to the window and Mr. Gribben sat facing her; they both looked at Beulah.

"Are n't you going to join us, Mrs. Jones?" asked Madame Surelle.

"*Miss* Jones," Beulah corrected, without moving.

"Beulah, draw up your chair to the table," commanded Mr. Gribben. "I want you to see for yourself the truth of this business."

Thus admonished, Beulah took her place between them, gingerly placing her clean, work-coarsened hands on the table, touching Madame Surelle's shapely, if soiled, ones.

"If there are any spirits present," said the medium, in an invoking voice, closing her eyes and swaying slightly, "will they indicate it by the usual method?"

Now Madame Surelle may have obeyed the Biblical instruction in not letting her left hand know what her right hand did, but Beulah's left hand knew. She felt a distinct pull from those

jeweled fingers touching hers, and, without a moment's hesitation, she pulled in the opposite direction.

This too ample assistance seemed to embarrass the spirits, and after a few feeble gyrations on the part of the table it became stationary.

Madame Surelle cleared her throat. "Perhaps there is some spirit present who would prefer to write a message. If so, indicate it by rapping."

From below the table came three distinct raps.

Mr. Gribben raised his bent head and challenged Beulah to doubt her own senses. "This is only the beginning," he said; "you 'll see!"

Writing material having been produced, they once more sat in solemn conclave. Presently the pencil in Madame Surelle's fingers began to dance upon the paper; it waltzed up one side and tangoed down the other, and in a final transport flew out of her hand.

She smiled tolerantly: "The spirits are so playful at times. I have had them tease me

like this for half an hour. Sometimes if I ask a question it calms them. Let me see— Will the spirits tell us who Mr. Gribben was in a former re-incarnation?"

The pencil twisted backward, described a circle, then wrote in small letters, "He was a king in Babylon, and she was his Christian slave."

"Who was?" demanded Beulah, off her guard, and in an instant the pencil had flourished off the letters, "Y-O-U."

"Don't mind them," said Madame Surelle; "they are still teasing. Such naughty spirits to-day. There are little vagrants who wait around to get false messages through. I 'll ask my control, Amenophis, to drive them away."

The pencil promptly assumed another angle and wrote in a bold back hand, "Amenophis says to tell John Anthony to take the pencil."

"Why, that 's my name!" said Mr. Gribben, excitedly. "What shall I do?"

"Just hold it lightly in your hand, thus, and I will place my fingers under your wrist like this. And I will ask you to give your other hand to Mrs. Jones."

"*Miss* Jones," corrected Beulah, with a look of fury.

For some time nothing happened. Then, slowly, the pencil moved, creeping uncertainly over the paper in long, feeble letters until it had written the one word, "Martha."

"She 's weak because she has been gone such a short time," explained Madame Surelle, "and, besides, the right of way is always given to the spirit who has been there longest. My control is Amenophis III, one of the Pharaohs, you remember, and yet he very seldom keeps me waiting. He can get a message through when half a dozen others may be waiting."

Mr. Gribben was divided between amazement at his own performance and admiration for one who could command the services of a Pharaoh, and speak with authority about the traffic laws of the other world. But he had no time to dwell upon such things, for again he felt his hand gliding over the paper.

"It says," translated Madame Surelle, "Martha hears your dear voice in death as she heard it in life."

Something very like a giggle escaped from Beulah. "Martha Gribben was deaf for ten years before she died," she said.

Mr. Gribben's hand trembled on the paper, then traveled back slowly and put a "not" after the "it."

"Beulah!" he demanded, excitedly. "Did you see that? Do you believe me when I tell you that I did *not* write that word?"

"I do," said Beulah, with a significant glance at Mrs. Surelle's fingers under his wrist.

Madame Surelle made an imperative motion for silence. "Amenophis wishes to write. I can always feel his presence. Give me the pencil."

She closed her eyes, drew a deep breath, and apparently surrendered herself to the departed Pharaoh. For ten minutes her hand dashed across the paper with lightning speed, covering sheet after sheet with bold back-handed writing. Then she gave a sigh of exhaustion and the pencil fell from her hand.

"Take it and read it," she said, weakly, to

Mr. Gribben. "It 's all for you. I have no idea what it says."

Mr. Gribben reverently collected the scattered sheets and, putting up a shade, read aloud:

"It is ordained that you should know that during your waking hours you function through your astral body plus your physical body, the latter being surrounded and interpenetrated by the matter of the former. When you fall asleep the dense body is left behind. You then function through your astral body alone, which is what the miscalled 'dead' are also doing. The living and the dead are therefore together again. If you wish to commune with your dear departed, you can do so through astral experiences, popularly known as dreams."

Mr. Gribben and Beulah exchanged glances of profound bewilderment, then they looked at the medium, who still sat with head back and closed eyes as if her recent round with Pharaoh had been a bit too much for her. Even Beulah's face expressed credulity. It was evidently harder for her to believe that Madame Surelle's fuzzy brain had evolved such a mes-

sage, than to believe that it came from another world.

"How do you go about it?" asked Mr. Gribben, studying the paper. "How do you understand about astral experiences and dreams?"

Madame Surelle roused herself with an effort. "It is really too long to go into here. If you are interested you can find the truth set forth in my 'Mystic Veil.' By buying it you become a member of the National Psychic Seekers, and you are entitled not only to all their publications, but to their advice and aid in interpreting any messages you may write in the future."

"But I don't think I could ever do anything without you," said Mr. Gribben.

Madame Surelle regarded him earnestly. "How can you doubt? To whom did the first message come last night? Who else in Bentville had been able to do automatic writing? I tell you, you are psychic to your finger-tips!"

Mr. Gribben looked at the above-mentioned finger-tips and shook his head doubtfully, whereupon Madame Surelle tried another tack.

"I suppose you know that all things are numbers. Numbers control our lives. Pythagoras taught us that. Now in what year were you born? Eighteen-sixty-three? Add those figures and they make eighteen, a multiple of three. What month? March! The third month. Your name, James Gribben, twelve letters, multiple of three. As I suspected, you are a perfect three."

Mr. Gribben looked pleased. He had n't the slightest idea what it all was about, but to be a perfect anything flattered his vanity.

"Do you mean that 's my lucky number?" he asked.

"Far more than that," said Madame Surelle. "It is your destiny. A little observation will prove to you that the figure three controls all you do. I knew you were either a perfect three or a perfect seven when I saw your face in the audience last night. Once having seen it, I could see nothing else."

Beulah gave a contemptuous sniff and rose from her chair. She put up the other shade and began to straighten the furniture, but

Madame Surelle still leaned on her elbows and gazed into Mr. Gribben's eyes.

"You must not falter on the very threshold of achievement," she urged. "You must practice automatic writing every night and send us the results, however unintelligible they appear to you. The spirits are fond of writing in strange tongues; they sometimes write backward, or upside down. Our experts will interpret these messages for a small sum, and you will be surprised often at the results. I beseech you not to listen to any discouragement in your investigation of this mighty truth. It is a debt you owe to science. You will promise me to persevere?"

Mr. Gribben yielded to the spell of those pale, insistent eyes and promised. He also bought a copy of "The Mystic Veil," at a price that sent Beulah into the kitchen in a towering rage.

From behind the door she watched Mr. Gribben help Madame into her coat; from the window she saw him assist her gallantly into the buggy, and then jump in beside her and gather up the reins.

"I 've seen folks before get spry off of spirits," she observed sarcastically, as she gathered up the sage counsels of Amenophis III and shoved them into the stove.

From that time on Mr. Gribben was firmly committed to spiritualism. Once a thing received his sanction it became sacred to him. There was never a twilight-time of misgiving in his mind; it was either day or night. A thing was either so or it was not so, and he always knew without a shadow of misgiving *which* it was. When Beulah offered a few caustic comments he promptly put her in her place, in that mental limbo to which he invariably relegated feminine intellects.

"This is something you know nothing whatever about," he told her. "If you are not willing to help me in my experiments, I will find somebody who is."

Thereupon Beulah, who had long ago discovered that non-resistance was her deadliest weapon, held her own counsel and obediently assisted at the nightly sittings.

Notwithstanding the fact that Mr. Gribben

was much more interested in experimenting than in theorizing, he made valiant efforts to understand "The Mystic Veil." Every night he required Beulah to read it to him, and even when he nodded at his post, she kept doggedly on, familiarizing herself with every phase of spiritual communication. After the reading he would sit for hours, waiting for the table to move. This happened seldom. To be sure it sometimes rose languidly on two legs, and on one memorable occasion it stood on one. But for the most part it performed its spiritualistic duties in a perfunctory way that showed plainly its heart was not in its work.

Things would have been discouraging indeed had it not been for the automatic writing. From the first night the pencil in Mr. Gribben's hand wandered obligingly over the paper, making feeble hieroglyphics which he duly forwarded to the Society of Psychic Seekers. A tremendous impetus was given to his enthusiasm when he received his first report and found that he had written a message in Coptic! The translation read:

"My strength grows with each summons to the earth world. Soon I will join thee in the astral body."

Beulah studied the paper skeptically. "How do you suppose Martha knew how to write that foreign language?" she asked.

"The same way I did!" retorted Mr. Gribben. "It 's a miracle that I can do anything, with you throwing cold water at every turn. I wonder when Madame Surelle is coming back this way. I 've a notion to write and ask her."

Beulah gave him a swift look of apprehension. The next day she began a little psychic research on her own behalf.

A few nights later, as they again sat facing each other across the small table, nothing short of Omniscience could have divined what was going on behind her placid features. No memories of time past or hopes of times to come lit up her leaden eyes. But when Mr. Gribben's "moving fingers writ, and having writ, moved on," and neither he nor she could read a word of it, she put forth a firm hand and laid it on Mr. Gribben's wrist.

"I might try doing what she did," she said, tentatively.

"Why, I never thought of that," confessed Mr. Gribben, pleased at this first evidence of sympathetic interest on her part. "Just put your two fingers under my wrist, like that."

For a moment they sat immovable then the pencil began to move, slowly but with precision, in even lines from the right side of the paper to the left, until the sheet was covered.

Mr. Gribben studied the result carefully. "It don't spell a thing, but it looks like it ought to. I am going to send it on to the society first thing to-morrow. Something will come of this, you 'll see."

Beulah made no comment, but for the next week she watched the mail-box with unusual interest, and when the rural-delivery postman left a letter addressed to Mr. Gribben she promptly opened it, read the contents, and, regumming the envelope, put it back in the box.

"What did I tell you?" asked Mr. Gribben, triumphantly, that night at supper. "The society reports that that message was a first-class

specimen of mirror writing. It says all I got to do is to hold it up before a looking-glass and I can read it for myself. They want to write me up for their paper and put my photograph in. They say they have n't had such a remarkable case for years. I told you it was something remarkable when I wrote it."

"What does it say?" asked Beulah, peering over his shoulder as he held the paper before the mirror.

"Well, that first word is 'Martha,' plain as day, and the next one— Here! Lemme see—" He adjusted his spectacles and proceeded with some difficulty: "Martha—don't —need—a—nother—medium. She will write —to you—direct. She says—for you—to have —the house painted."

Mr. Gribben's jaw dropped with astonishment. "Did you *ever* see anything to beat that? It might have been Martha in the flesh speaking those words. You know there ain't any use denying the fact that Martha was a jealous-feeling woman. It was exactly like her to get nervous about that Madame Surelle."

Beulah took the paper and studied it before the looking-glass. "It ain't a bit like her handwriting," she objected.

"Well, do you reckon *you* could write natural if you was doing it upside down and hindside front? You would n't believe your eyes if you was to see her hand on the paper. I wish I never had to talk to you about these things."

But, greatly as he objected to Beulah's skepticism, he had to depend upon her for co-operation. Together they established a communication with the departed Martha that revolutionized the entire household. A deep concern for domestic affairs wholly lacking to her in life seemed to possess Martha in the spirit world. She insisted on the house being painted, on the fences being mended; she even concerned her astral mind with old Kitty and the decrepit buggy.

"But you surely ain't going to do everything she tells you?" protested Beulah.

"I am," said Mr. Gribben. "There 's no living woman whose advice I 'd give a copper

cent for, but when one comes back from the dead and tells me that if I don't spend my money while I am living that Tom Gribben's children are going to squander it in riotous living when I 'm dead, why, I listen to her. What do you reckon it will cost to paint the house?''

The next few months were so much taken up in carrying out Martha's numerous suggestions that there was little time left for further investigations. Beulah indulged in a perfect orgy of house-cleaning. She had never before had a free hand in this supreme event of the year, and she made the most of her opportunity. The farm-house blossomed with the fruit-trees, and even Mr. Gribben showed signs of a second blooming. He bought a new suit, and had his beard trimmed, and even made dark inquiries concerning sage tea.

''I 'm thinking something of going over to Claytown to camp-meeting this spring,'' he confided to Beulah.

''Mrs. Bullock and Miss Wilson asked me if you was setting out,'' Beulah replied, meekly.

Now Mr. Gribben, like most crusty, domineer-

ing men, was very sensitive to criticism, and this remark had the desired effect of driving him back to the cemetery and the seances. Following a suggestion in "The Mystic Veil," he bought a double slate and, tying it securely with a knot of his own invention, put it in the table-drawer. Two nights later he untied the string and opened the slate. In the middle appeared the following letters:

B A G U S I R T V C N E
R E B U O E A V U C D L V N A D Z H
L R M A N Y
R O C R T L A I O B C T D E H N U E V Z S

"It 's in cipher!" cried Mr. Gribben, excitedly. "Get 'The Magic Veil' and see what it says about ciphers."

Beulah obediently brought out the large volume and turned to the chapter and read:

"It is a favorite device of the spirits to hide a message in a jumble of letters. The key to this is to be found in a magic number that unlocks the mystery. Try odd numbers first, as, for instance, every third letter, or fifth letter, or seventh."

"Let us try three," suggested Mr. Gribben.

"She said I was a Perfect Three. Put 'em down while I call out."

Together they counted out the third letters and there lay the message revealed:

b a *G* u s *I* r t *V* c n *E*
r e *B* u o *E* a v *U* c d *L* v n *A* d z *H*
l r *M* a n *Y*
r o *C* r t *L* a i *O* b c *T* d e *H* n u *E* v z *S*

Mr. Gribben uttered an exclamation of almost profane amazement. "I don't know which to be the most surprised at," he said, "that the spirits could untie that knot, or that Martha could work out all that letter business! It is the most astounding thing I ever witnessed!"

The next day he handed over to Beulah the key to Martha's wardrobe, and also a box containing her cameo pin and camel's-hair shawl. "They were hers to give away in life, and they are hers to give away in death," he declared magnanimously.

After that Beulah blossomed with the rest. She had fallen heir, not only to Martha's clothes, but to all her personal possessions,

among which was an elaborate brown coiffure known as a transformation. That it justified its name was demonstrated on Beulah's first Sunday in her new apparel.

"I never would have known you!" Mr. Gribben declared. "The clothes look familiar, of course, but *you* look different. What *have* you done to yourself?"

"Just what every other woman does," said Beulah.

So impressed was he by her improved appearance that he offered to take her to church with him.

"No," said Beulah, firmly, "I can't afford to take any risks. I should n't be surprised if people was talking already."

"About us?" asked Mr. Gribben aghast.

Beulah nodded. "I been thinking that maybe I ought to be going on back to Locust, though land knows I 'd hate to."

"That 's not to be thought of!" cried Mr. Gribben, in instant alarm. "Why, who do you suppose I 'd ever get to look after the farm the way you do?"

"Well, a unmarried person can't take no risks," said Beulah.

The matter evidently weighed upon Mr. Gribben, and his anxiety deepened as Beulah's hints of departure recurred at shorter intervals. He worked himself into quite a perturbed state about it, and even sank to picturing his forlorn condition in case she left him.

"I am going to see if I can't get some advice from Martha," he said one day at noon. "You have supper early and we 'll call up the spirits."

That night they sat for a long time at the little table, waiting for some response from the unpunctual Martha. Mr. Gribben's hand wandered over the paper in meaningless hieroglyphics until he grew impatient.

"I get sick of all this Coptic!" he said. "I wish it would go on and write English. You put your fingers under my wrist; that sort of concentrates things."

Beulah did as she was bidden, and straightway the pencil wrote:

See Isaiah, 62:4.

Mr. Gribben reached for the Bible, and, turning to the passage, read:

"Thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken; neither shall thy land any more be termed Desolate: but thou shalt be called Hepzibah, and thy land Beulah: for the Lord delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married."

Mr. Gribben closed the book and looked at Beulah. "Thy land shall be called Beulah, and thy land shall be married," he repeated slowly. "Surely you ain't thinking of getting *married*, Beulah Jones?"

"Why not?" said Beulah, with a toss of the late Mrs. Gribben's transformation.

The rest of the evening Mr. Gribben appeared lost in abstraction; from time to time he cast surreptitious glances at Beulah as she moved about the dining-room, and once he got out the Bible and reread the passage in Isaiah.

"Beulah!" he broke forth, at last, "I don't know what on earth we been thinking about all this time. It 's just come to me what Martha means. She wants you and me to get married and go on living here just like we are. It 's as

plain as the nose on your face, and yet I never saw it till this minute. Talk about your spirit control! Why, if ever a man was led into a thing, I was led into this!"

And Beulah looked at him and smiled one of her rare smiles, which somehow reconciled all those misfit features, but, according to her custom, she said nothing.

LOWRY

By Cale Young Rice

LOWRY

I

HE stood there under the thatched eaves of a low-class sakè-shop and held out a hand as we passed. It was raining. Not the casual down-pour of America, nor the "business as usual" sort of England; but in the sad Japanese fashion that brings mists thronging to temple-tops, like doubts and despairs to an appeaseless mind.

He was garbed in clothes as tattered as his beard. Coat and trousers that hung loosely down, as if heavy with shame; shoes that had evidently not been bought by him; a hat serving for little except to partly conceal long-uncombed hair—on which the rain, trickling from the roof, dripped with disheartening certainty. Yet what was most striking about him was that he was indubitably, and somehow distinguishedly, American.

In the kuruma with me was Mrs. Neilson, the piquant widow of my former commandant, who was now living in Yokohama, and who, I confess, was the chief attraction of my stopover in Japan. We were making a train for Tokio—off for a reception at the Embassy.

For either of us to have tossed the beggar a coin from under wraps and umbrellas would not have been easy; yet I supposed my companion, who uttered a quick, pained, "Oh!" was merely too shocked or startled to do so. Nor did the pallor of her face, as the straw-sandalled feet of our kurumayas stopped at the station, suggest more to me. As for the disturbing bounder himself, I am sure his look had only been one of bleared, fatal, smiling misery.

My disgust at the mischance nevertheless led me to pause in the station-door and look back. That he was, or had been, one of our own kind doubly irritated me. Why couldn't such degenerates keep their degradation out of the way of decent people with a day's freedom ashore? Should the prodigal, only, inherit the earth?

The truth is also that I particularly wanted Mrs. Neilson to be in her happiest mood. Her loveliness, aloof and uncompromising as it was, had intrigued me from time to time for several years, and I had quite made up my mind—well, to mention matrimony. But this rotter, a disgrace to his sex, seemed to have stirred some memory of the masculine in her that was not likely to improve my chances. It was most provoking.

"See here," I said, catching up with her. "It 's too bad—that beastly derelict, I mean!"

"Yes," she answered, standing strangely motionless, her face turned away from me.

"An American begging, and of all places here, in Yokohama!"

"Yes," she agreed again, but in a tone of such unmistakable bitterness and shame as gave me pause. For while passing a down-and-out is not pleasant, and while no one likes to have his nationality outraged on the way to a festivity meant to celebrate it, why bitterness and shame?

I purchased tickets, half aware in doing so

of stupidly accepting too little change for my ten yen note. Then silently puzzled I led my companion to an empty compartment, through a crowd of Japanese on clacking geta, of tourists, and of naval officers in dress uniform, like myself.

I did not, however, enter the compartment with her. Before I could do so she sank to a seat, as if relieved to be out of the throng, and sat shaking in a rigor of self-control.

"My dear Mrs. Neilson," I said, "what is it?"

She could not at first reply, but only sat shaking with clenched hands in her lap. After a moment, however, words came.

"On the streets!" she began. "Begging! . . . Oh, it 's horrible!"

"But, my dear lady, why so horrible? He 's only a—"

"No, he 's more, more!" she cried, rising from her place, and almost sobbing the words. Then she turned towards me, with hands pressed against her breast.

"You 'll have to forgive me," she said, as I

waited for enlightenment, "but I can't go to Tokio."

There was stern distress, almost anger in her note, as well as disappointment.

"But tell me," I protested.

"It 's a shame," she broke out. "It is! It is! But something must be done. I must go back. Or perhaps you would—oh, would you?"

The change in her face was a revelation to me as she again sank to her seat. Her accustomed poise was wholly gone. Her eyes, always a little hard, were haunted; her lips strained and drawn. The black aigrette in her crimson hat was trembling. She had, it became manifest to me, known him somewhere, tragically, before. And now he had turned up, like an evil card in the deck of Fortune, and with that suddenness which makes the securest life seem to rest on quicksand.

The compartment door was still open. In spite of distaste for such mixups, and of provocation at the prospect of my lost holiday and opportunity with her, I quietly closed it.

"Surely I 'll go," I said through the open

window. "An American can't let an American stand begging at a Japanese pothouse without doing something."

I had put it objectively, to ease the complexity. But she was a woman whose self-control, once shaken, is more easily broken by another's self-possession than by calamity.

"Go, for God's sake," she urged, quite undone. "I can't bear to think of him there. His name is Lowry. Go, and tell him— Oh, get him away from here, out of Yokohama, anywhere, or—"

The rest of her words did not reach me, for the train was drawing slowly out of the station. My last glimpse of her distorted face revealed it with a map of Japan, framed—ironically it seemed to me, above it.

II

When I got back to the sake-shop the dishevelled Lowry still stood there. But now his smile was sharp and mocking, for Charity had evidently passed by on the other side.

As I approached he recognized me as a recent passer who had failed to give, and instinctively lowered his outstretched hand. It was, I could see, one thing to be tossed a casual coin and forgotten, but to be approached and spoken to by a fellow countryman was quite another matter. Pride is sometimes stronger than honor or decency, or even than the unbearable thirst of dissipation.

"Will you come with me?" I said, curtly enough to make the invitation less than pleasing.

"And where, my friend?" he answered, with a polite and refinedly disconcerting irony, which seemed to express contempt for any assumption of superiority on my part, as well as for existence in general.

"To get some clothes," I said, "and food. And if you must, a drink."

Our eyes met squarely. In the exchange I could feel a vitiated soul trying to meet mine as an equal.

"And why this Christian charity?" he mocked, shrugging his rags and perhaps shiver-

ing in the wet air of a somewhat chilly summer day.

"Well, mainly because I 'm a junk-headed fool," I replied, this time acridly.

He looked slowly at me—at the braid and epaulets of my rather smart uniform, cap, shoes, then at his squalor. The contrast was not pleasant, but he smiled—perhaps with amusement at the thought of the humiliation it would cause me—evidently a person without humor—to walk the tourist-thronged streets with him. The smile, though sardonic, was unspeakably wretched.

"As you please," he assented, a touch of mockery still left, for self-respect, in his bow; and we turned into the street.

He walked beside me with shame, and yet with contemptuous enjoyment. Our way was past the rich curio shops displaying shadowy treasures of bronze, silver and ivory. It took all Mrs. Neilson's attractions, I 'm willing to admit, to keep me from turning him loose with yen in his pocket, or at best from handing him over somehow to the care of the consulate.

But with clothes obtained he was at length seated before a substantial lunch on the balcony of my room at the hotel. The rain had ceased. The Bund with its moist human stream flowed below. In the Harbor were tethered ships of many nations, swarmed about by sampans, and from my destroyer floated the beloved stars and stripes.

He ate and drank in silence. I stood with my back to him looking over the sea I had been so glad to get away from a few hours since, but that I now heartily wished myself back on, out of this irritating shore-pother.

It had to be gotten over, however, so I turned. He was just finishing his whiskey and soda, and was doubtless considering the particular tone in which to thank me, when I spoke.

"I don't know who you are, where you came from, or what you are doing in Yokohama," I began with an intensity that made him stare, "but I've got to ask you to be good enough to tell me where you wish to go."

This was not entirely impressive or tactful, as he was quick to see. His lip curled.

"Have I informed you," he replied quietly, "that I desire to change my residence? I 'm obliged to you, no doubt"—he shrugged deprecatingly toward the empty dishes—"but as I 've only recently arrived in this delightful city—delightful, that is, to you," he added with secret hatred in his eyes, "I don't see why you are so particularly interested in my departure."

"Nor do I," I answered harshly, realizing that I must speak plainer. "But there is a reason—and I 've no doubt it is a good one."

His stare became more guarded, but there was only such doubt in his face as comes easily to those who distrust destiny at large.

"This is most interesting," he said with more elaborate irony, yet at the same time clutching an uncontrolled hand. "I 've no love for this city, mind you; no more than you, a seaman, would have for a rotten ship in a China typhoon. I came here first fifteen years ago. And then, my friend, I was a lad, happy, healthy, hopeful—my God!"

He paused at the vision his words had unintentionally raised before him—paused as if it

were a ghost ready to strangle him. I knew I must say more—to get the scene over.

"Well, you must clear out," I growled. "And the sooner the better. If you lack money, all right. That 's all I' ve got to say, except that one can't hang around making women miserable."

"Women?"

"The woman with me this morning when I passed you was Mrs. Hilda Neilson."

It took a moment before the name got through the blankness of his stare. Then he quivered as if a harpoon had suddenly been hooked in his heart, and a flood of horror surged over his face—such horror, it seemed, as might break into any terrible passion.

"Hilda—Neilson?" fell from him, like slow drops of blood. "Hilda—Neilson?"

I stared in turn. The inner cause of his horror and anguish was of course unknown to me, but of one thing I became aware. The thought that he had stood there in his degradation begging of her, and had been recognized, was an overwhelming poison.

"God! my God!" he exclaimed, gazing at me with the expression of one who has been diabolically betrayed—and not for the first time—by chance.

Then as if on the verge of hysteria, or at least with an indignation that made him writhe, he cried:

"It 's a lie! She lives in San Francisco. She would n't come back here. She would n't! Who are you, anyway?"

His debilitated body shook from head to foot.

"I don't think she believed *you* would come back," I said.

It was getting hard to keep pity and kindness out of my voice; for back of his ruin, I began to feel, was some calamity greater than mere infirmity of individual will. Life has a way, at times, of destroying some of us who are most avid of living with subtle and impersonal mischances more relentless than our own folly.

His passion, however, was now caught up and torn by another thought.

"She sent you to me," he raged. "Sent you

with money left her by Howard Neilson—whom she never loved, never, though she did marry him! She sent you to get me out of town—out of sight. Brushing her skirts against a memory that has become bloated is n't, doubtless, to her taste!"

I did not deny this. At the moment it would have been useless. His loud sense of betrayal was deafening him to any other possible interpretation.

He continued:

"You, my gallant friend, may know nothing of all this: you who no doubt want to marry her yourself. But you shall know it.

"I came here, as I told you, fifteen years ago —came to marry Hilda Holt. Yes—I! We had been engaged for a year, and had written each other two, three, four times a week. It was April when I sailed from San Francisco—the month set for the wedding. I was young," his voice broke and irony dropped away from it as he spoke; "the Golden Gate seemed to me the very gate of Heaven as our ship put out through it."

He paused. Undeniable sobs were on the point of breaking from him.

"She met me, out there in the Harbor, came on a tug. As it danced up and down on the waves, it seemed to me she was dancing with joy at seeing me. And perhaps she was, inwardly; perhaps not. God, I don't know, now. She was flushed, anyhow, and happy and beautiful—fatally beautiful. And yet she was restrained, she was Hilda Holt.

"My things were taken to the hotel and handed to the porter, an ivory-faced villain who . . . But no; wait till you have heard, to judge him. Then we went to Hilda's home, to see her people.

"The streets seemed enchanted, for I 'd never been out of America before, and our Kuruma was double, so I sat close to her—as you did this morning. To live in this place, as I expected to; and to work for her among these little people who seemed so pleasant and kindly —it suffocates me with despair as I recall it. . . .

"Her people received me open-armed—as I

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expected. They jested at my infatuation, and about the wedding. Meanwhile we went out through the streets of little shops, whose blue and white hangings with oriental characters on them seemed to me like good luck signs. Good luck? They are writhing serpents of Hell to me now!"

He reached for his empty whiskey glass and drained the few drops that had gathered in its bottom. The mere habit seemed to steady him.

"The third day Hilda was occupied with clothes. I was left alone at the hotel, with nothing to do. The charm of the land had already intoxicated me. It can, with almost any man. It soothes the senses, yet lures them. And the curst place does so with such quaintness and witchery of beautiful sights and sounds, that he never thinks of evil or danger.

"An idea struck me that I would buy something for Hilda; something wonderful and unique; something that even the connoisseurs would gape at; something, too, for our home which was to be built in Japanese fashion. For we intended to be real orientals, Hilda and I

did, with mats, shoji, kakemono and all.

"I told the porter at the door that I wanted a treasure of the rarest sort, and asked him to tell my kurumaya. I was young, and no doubt love—and desire—were rawly apparent in me. Perhaps that porter misunderstood me. Perhaps he did n't. For years after I would have killed him at sight—anywhere—merely on the strength of the doubt."

He pushed the knife, unconsciously picked up from the table, away from him as he said it, and went on:

"My kurumaya quickly wheeled me away—off across the canal where the fishermen sunned themselves in sampans; past Motomachi; up the hill—you know the way; and along the winding residence road leading to Mississippi Bay.

"The cherries were in bloom. Bamboos swayed. I sat back and crossed my legs. Flowers and miniature gardens everywhere, as now, and those shady rocks the natives prize so.

"I was transported." He paused. The bitterness and irony of years again fell from him;

and it was easy to imagine him as he must have been—young, handsome, radiant, with a blissful future before him. "Yes, transported, and in love. And I had been faithful, too, never untrue to Hilda—even in thought. Yet if desire was at work in me, was n't I a man? Anyhow I drank in beauty at every pore, though being all the while in a sort of Nirvana."

Some hatred of the word, as he said it, brought him back to his present bitter self—from which, indeed, more than a moment's escape was impossible to him.

"My kurumaya had taken a direction away from the shopping district, but that did n't seem strange. What did it matter where I bought my gift? What did anything matter but the sunshine and enchantment; but the lure and sweetness of this precious land of the lotus, where I had come to marry Hilda?

"Well, before I knew it we were reaching the edge of the city. And again before I knew it my kurumaya had turned suddenly to the left into a little bamboo-walled garden, and had circled around a rocky pool and several pine-

trees in the centre. There he stopped, hot, smiling and panting before a Japanese door with its shoji thrown open. And inside—"

Speech failed him again, and this time his head sank to his arms that rested on the table. His face was twitching. When he lifted it to continue, he asked, with startling hopelessness, "Do you believe in freedom of the will?"

The question was evidently always at the bottom of his soul that had been overthrown and betrayed. He did not wait for an answer.

"Inside there stood a girl. That porter had, indeed, sent me to something rare. She was the aristocratic type of Japanese beauty, long oval face, black hair done up in the geisha fashion, dreamy eyes—that kind. A kimono of light rose silk hung and fell open from her shoulders. She wore little else.

"She turned and smiled at me, in the way Japanese women can—a submissive, irresistible smile. They get it, I suppose, through ages of wheedling their indifferent men.

" 'Please to come in,' she said. Then, when she saw clearly that I was taken by surprise,

and stood helpless before her beauty, 'Please to come up stairs.'

"They were her only words of English, but as I followed they seemed like a leash that at that moment I would rather have died than broken. She gave me food, sakè, music on the koto, dancing—and herself.

"Yes," he went on, almost fiercely, "herself. And Puritan as I was and am yet in belief, those two hours did not seem wrong, but only a part of the enchantment of the land."

This old insoluble perplexity—of desire divinely implanted that yet can bring ruin—was, I fancy, much in his thought, but now he dismissed it with a sentence.

"Nature's trick is to punish us most when she has tempted us most. My dose came. We heard a sudden noise of voices down stairs, and what seemed to be terrified denials from several inmates of the house. Then there were feet on the stairs, the shoji of our room were thrown open, and police stood in the entrance. The girl beside me grew pale, at some accusal in Japanese. Denials broke from her lips—

bewitching and indignant, but vain. A thousand yen note had been stolen in the place the night before, and all found there were ordered before the magistrates."

The rest fell from him brokenly, apathetically, as if he were exhausted with the passion of trying to vindicate—to a stranger—what, perhaps, could not be vindicated.

There had been a scandal, as a matter of course. He had been compelled to appeal to his prospective father-in-law, as he was unknown in Yokohama. Hilda had turned to stone. She would not see or hear him, giving as a reason that unfaithfulness at the moment of marriage meant certain unfaithfulness afterward.

He had written pages of pleas—for three months: his letters always came back. Oh, she was hard, frozen, cruel, Hilda was, as only the proud can be. And then in six months she had married—she who had scorned marriage except for love!

He had gone away to Shanghai, and into wild company. He began to drink, to play the races,

to lose. From Shanghai he went to Java and put the little money he had left in a coffee concern—which failed.

Then malaria had attacked him. He was for months in a Surabaya hospital, friendless and moneyless. When he got up he was too done for to work—and he wanted liquor, wanted it badly—to forget.

Only a step remained from that to "beachcombing," to drifting here, there, anywhere, helped from time to time by a little money borrowed, begged or earned—for he would not appeal to his people. Then he had come back to Yokohama with the promise in a month's time of a job. It was a last chance for him. An old friend was on the way from San Francisco, one who might help him.

I heard him out, and ordered more whiskey, loath as I was to do so. When he had drunk it at a gulp, I could speak.

"I don't know," I said, "whether character is destiny, as we've heard it contended, but destiny is often enough hell. And as it has been so for you, Lowry, I don't mind saying I'm

sorry. In fact you have more of my sympathy in this matter than Mrs. Neilson. Nevertheless, it 's clear you must leave Yokohama."

He took this, looking hard at me, and wiping his drink-swollen lips in the habitual way. An understanding of man to man passed slowly between us.

He rose silently and looked around the room as if not only Yokohama, but indeed the whole world were stark prison walls for him. Then his gaze went far away out the window, past the ships and the sea, to another world he had long lost sight of—the world of *noblesse oblige* and of the ideals to which he had been bred.

The struggle which took place in him was brief. Perhaps he had suffered too much to keep it up long. Perhaps, as I am inclined to think, the result was a clear spiritual triumph for him.

"Yes," he smiled, miserably, sardonically, as when he had first met me, "I must go. Chances are only for those who don't need a chance. And you may tell Hilda," he added, with a tinge of scorn concealing the gallantry of his lie,

"that she was right. Hilda, you know, always liked to be right."

This was his last submission. The sense of wrong he had suffered was the one thing he could oppose to his unforgettable sense of degradation—it was his ballast against the reelings of despair.

"I will tell her," I said.

He took up his hat, offered me his hand—hesitantly, and after I had grasped it, went out.

III

I sat smoking till dusk and after dinner went to see Hilda. The rain had ceased. The moon was damnably haunting. It poured phosphorescent silver on the temples, where crimson lanterns swung; on shadowy gate-posts, whose ideographs, I recalled, seemed to Lowry like writhing hell-serpents; on the branches of bamboo and pine; on the mystery of the sea.

Hilda, herself again, was expecting me—in manner and attire cool, handsome, complete. It was fascinating; partly, I believe, because the

uncertainty of life at sea made the certainty that she would always be thus presentable most tempting.

We walked in the garden—that I might smoke, or perhaps that she might throw over her shoulders a rarely embroidered Mandarin coat of irresistible hue. I was given an account of the day at the Embassy, begun with regret that I had missed it, but related with the satisfaction and assuredness of one who has recently been soothed by admiration and flattery.

Yet flattery had not proved a complete anodyne to the encounter of the morning. It but covered insecurity—I could see that. And she was little pleased with the silence I was determined to keep until she asked for what she most wished to hear.

"Well?" she said at length, laying an intimate hand for the first time on my arm.

The touch was crucial. Twenty-four hours ago it would have brought ardent avowal to my lips. Now I let it rest here without seeming to consider the caress or even to be aware of it.

"Oh: he 's going away," I said, as if that were all that was needed.

"That 's decent, at least," she answered, withdrawing the touch, at which, perversely enough, I was piqued and fretted.

"Yes; he 'll go," I averred. "I fancy you 'll not be bothered again. He left you a message."

My cigar had gone out. I lit it again indifferently, getting a rich glimpse of her face as I did so.

"He asked me to tell you," I said slowly, "that you were right."

I felt her tremble, as if the words had withdrawn from her some invisible support. But immediately she straightened, with gratified—or was it determined?—self-satisfaction.

Yes, I thought, Hilda likes to be right. And no doubt she had been in dealing with Lowry. Almost any fine woman would have taken the same course. Yet it seemed to me that the certainty of having been right at that most critical moment, would, perhaps harden the last tenderness in her, for she was, she was, hard.

I finished my cigar, the guilty tenth that day —and prepared to take my leave.

"When shall I see you again?" she asked, walking with me to the gate.

It was uncertain, I replied, as I had to go to Tokio to-morrow, and perhaps directly from there to Kobe to join my ship. It had been charming to see her. Would she be here when I next returned? If so, I must see more of her —much more.

At the gate we said good-by—she puzzled and perhaps a little pained. But not with self-suspicion, I sneered to myself, for to those who like being right so much as Hilda, self-suspicion is scarcely a habit.

Two days later I sailed from Kobe. But six months ago I met an old friend of the Neilsons at the club in Shanghai, and I admit that I listened hungrily to his talk of them.

They had never hit it off together, it seemed, though it was hard to say just why. She had always been charming in her manner toward Neilson—perfect. And their home was all it should be—only something was missing.

His opinion was that she secretly regarded her marriage a mistake, and would never marry again; perhaps because she was in love, and always had been, with a chap named Lowry to whom she had been engaged before she met Neilson.

With an instant sinking of the heart I knew that he was right, and at the same time I knew that I loved her—knew it certainly. Yet on the night I gave her Lowry's message might I not have changed her? She had laid her hand on my arm as if—

I put the thought away, rose, said good-night, and went to my ship.

THE NUT

By Alice Hegan Rice

THE NUT

"YES, sir," said the ward master, "I been in this here prison ward ever since the hospital opened in September, 1917. Doctors have come and gone, nurses have come and gone, fellows in training here have gone over seas and landed back here for demobilization; but I 've stuck right on, and what I 've seen has been a-plenty.

"We 've had some lively bunches of kids in here. What are they in for? Everything from smoking cigarettes in bed to committing murder. Most of them are in for military offenses, and nearly all of them are either waiting for operations or getting over them.

"Talk about your pep! You take a lot of colts out of pasture and put 'em in a box-car, and you 'll get some idea of what we 're up against. You see, the boys in all the other wards have got talking-machines and story-books and magazines; they got a stream of

visitors, pillow-patters with baskets of good things, Red Cross ladies that they used to deliver ice and groceries to their back doors, hanging round to wait on 'em and take 'em automobile-riding. And yet you 'll hear 'em grousing.

"Up here in 8-C, where they can't even have a postage-stamp except on Friday, they are the cheerfulest lot in the hospital. I guess most of them learned that in the trenches. The less fun you get outside, the more you got to pump up inside if you want to keep going. There ain't anywhere that they tell such funny stories, keep up such a ragging, or play as many darn pranks as they do right here.

"Why, only yesterday, when Number Six was brought in from the operating-room, and we was waiting for him to come to, did n't some of those devils rub talcum powder all over his hands and cross 'em on his chest, and take some flowers off the table and strew 'em all over his sheet? Number Six is Irish, and he saw the joke as soon as he got one eye open; but with some it might have been fatal.

"I suppose you always feel a bit different to the first lot you take care of than to any others, but there 's another bunch that I remember better than any of them. It was the crowd that was here last Christmas, the first overseas men we got in. There was Ricks, that refused to have his arm taken off, and lit out for his home town in a bath-robe. He stayed just long enough to git ten doctors to sign a paper saying the arm did n't need amputation; then he come back and give himself up. He did three months in the prison ward; but what did *he* care? His arm got well!

"Then there was Baker, that old bullet-headed bounder that could say more funny things than any vaudyville man I ever saw, and little old chicken-livered Mert and the Nut. Did n't I ever tell you about the Nut? Well, that 's a story all to itself. He sure did keep us guessing.

"You see, nobody knew whether the Nut was crazy or not. The medical officer said he was, and the disciplinary officer said he was n't, and all the rest of us changed our minds a dozen

times a day. I remember he was under observation for the first three weeks, sitting over there on that end bed, refusing to talk, and just staring holes in the wall. It was the only thing I ever knew to get the other fellows' goat. They could n't leave him alone. When they was n't deviling him, they was trying to cheer him up and coax him to talk. You see he was up against it, for if he was crazy, the nut-picks was laying for him up in the psychiatric ward; and if he was sane, the court martial was waiting for him on a double charge of bigamy and forgery. They had him coming and going.

"What complicated matters was that the Nut had been shot up at Chateau-Thierry, gassed at Belleau Woods, and recommended three times for bravery. Since he had come back to America, between the times he was getting married and forging checks, he was being shifted around from one base hospital to another, each new doctor finding another piece of bone to take out of his hip. After our captain had taken out his souvenir, and the Nut was able to sit up, this crazy business developed. Some days

he could n't seem to remember anything, and other days you 'd catch him looking real intelligent, but always with a sort of hurt look in his eyes that made you want to look the other way.

"He never took any notice of anything or anybody, and it was downright pathetical to see him sitting there with his big fists limp in his lap, letting those kids plaster up his hair with adhesive plaster, or shave his upper lip to look like Charlie Chaplin.

"You bet they did n't do it when Mrs. Merton was around. She was the mother of the boy in the bed next to his, and she was sure good to him. You see, her son was in a nasty hole, too. He was a regular baby, one of those spoiled kids that never did anything harder than dancing until he was caught in the draft. The family pulled all sorts of wires to keep him out of the service, but there was nothing doing. Well, when he had to buckle down to army life, he just could n't stand it, and by the time the 84th Division was ready to sail he was in such a blue funk that he shot himself in the foot to keep from going with his battery.

"A story like that goes the rounds, you know, and he would have had a cold deal even in 8-C, where they ain't over-particular, if his mother had n't come the day after he did, and served out his time with him. Say, I wish you could have known Mrs. Merton. She was one of these gentle, trustful sort of ladies that just would n't believe anything bad about anybody. She did n't stop at spoiling her own boy; she spoiled every blamed fellow that come into that ward. I 've seen her sit up and bathe a drunk's head all morning while she lapped up all he told her about its being his first offense, and he never would have done it if another fellow had n't persuaded him, and all that line of talk. She 'd slip candy in for the boys, and chewing-gum, and cigarettes. Once she got me in bad by bringing a homesick country guy a book to read. He never had seen a book of short stories, and he says to the nurse: 'Say, what kind of a book is this? I keep beginning it over again at each chapter, and waiting for all these folks to git hitched up together; but they never do.'

"The nurse bawled me out for the book get-

ting in, but of course I never give Mrs. Merton away.

"It was her that started the boys to knitting. She got 'em cotton and yarn and needles, and had 'em around her three deep learning to put on and put off and cast over. One big bloke of a regular that had been brought in with a broken head after a raid on a dive down in Cedar Street, learned to do the neatest pattern with white thread and a needle not much bigger than a tooth-pick. He had been working at it for a couple of weeks before he thought to ask:

" 'Say, lady, what am I making?'

" 'It 's a yoke,' says she.

" 'Well,' says he, 'I ain't got but one girl that 's big enough to fit it, and that 's the Goddess of Liberty.'

"But I started to tell you about Mrs. Merton and the Nut. It looked like she could n't stand seeing him sitting there all day just looking at the wall, never speaking and hardly ever changing his position. After all the rest of us had given up, she kept on trying to rouse him and get him interested in something. One time

when she brought some flowers in for Mert she saw him watching her fix them, and she put some in his glass on the table by the bed. All that day he looked at the flowers instead of the wall, and when she said sort of encouraging, 'You love flowers, don't you?' he spoke for the first time and said sort of confused, 'Do I?'

"That woman's patience beat anything I ever saw. Think of a lady like her being mixed up with all that riffraff day after day for three solid months! She 'd not only look after that selfish kid of hers, listening at his whines, reading to him, playing games with him, boosting him up, but she had time to listen to everybody else's troubles, and to work with the Nut besides.

"I 've seen her stand by his bed for half an hour coaxing him to walk up and down the porch with her. He never would budge for anybody else, but he moved for her. Sometimes she 'd get him to stop outside for a few minutes and watch the boys play 'Sugar-Loo.' Don't you know what 'Sugar-Loo' is? Why, each fellow saves a little sugar from his tray

and makes it into a pile, and they bet on which one gets an ant on it first. Talk about gambling! I could write a book on the number of different ways the doughboy has thought out to swap money.

"Most of the fellows in here are just plain drunks or awols. Awols? Why, absent without leaves. You see, they come into the hospital, get operated on, and before the smell of ether is out of their hair they hook it for town. Then they get carted back *here,* and we got to get 'em well and punish 'em at the same time. Some job, I can tell you! I got two leg cases now that 's in wheel-chairs, and if I ain't watching every minute, they get to racing on the porch, and there 's a mix-up of plaster casts and splints that makes trouble for everybody.

"But I want to finish telling you about Mrs. Merton. You see, before she come in to 8-C the language around here was fierce. I 've heard cussing going on in as many as three languages at once. Well, after she come, Baker hit on the idea of a cuss fund. He 's the one I was telling you about that was building the yoke for the

Goddess of Liberty. Well, all the fellows fell into the plan of paying fines for swearing, and then blowing in the proceeds for eats. They worked out a notice and tacked it on the wall beside a little pasteboard box that they put up to hold the fines they had to pay. It said:

Plain damns	10 cents
Darns	5 cents
Gol darn	15 cents
Hells	10 cents
Devils	5 cents
Damn with one extra	15 cents
Damn with more than one extra	25 cents

And when the box was full of cash, they 'd get Mrs. Merton to go out and buy anything she could bring back without the guards at the door getting on to it. I 've seen her come in with her knitting bag looking like a featherbed, but I sort er shut my eyes. She used to mend my clothes, you know, and do a lot of little things that I had n't had done since I left home.

"Something was going on every minute those days. I remember one Sunday a chaplain brought us some hymn-books and tried to start

the fellows to singing. He had n't been gone five minutes before they was singing all those sacred songs to rag-time tunes, and we had a free-for-all fight over who should have the books to learn the words first.

"The only two patients who never took any part in the mix-ups was Merton and the Nut. The curious thing was that the boys hated Merton and liked the Nut. Have you ever noticed how a person always gives his real self away? Drunk or sober, sane or crazy, talking or silent, he *stands* for something, and you take his real measure in spite of what he does or says.

"When Mrs. Merton went over to the hostess' house at night the boys used to tell each other what they 'd do to Mert if she never came back. But she always came, often before the orderlies got done mopping up the next morning. She 'd have sat by Mert's bed all night if we 'd 'a' let her.

"Well, long about Christmas the boy took a turn for the worse. He began to run a fever and have pains in his leg, and the captain decided to open up his foot and see what was the

trouble. The night before they was to operate the wound began to bleed, and I heard the surgeon telling the night nurse that he was afraid it was a loose piece of bone that had pierced an artery. The bleeding kept up something fierce, and by the time they rushed him over to the operating room and got him back again, it looked to everybody like the boy was going to die. I posted out for his mother.

"Talk about your pluck! She was as game as he was nervous. She just sat down beside that bed where she 'd been sitting for three solid months, and gathered him up to her, and comforted him like he was a baby, which he was. Every now and then she 'd make an excuse to slip out to the kitchen, where she 'd lean against the ice-box, white as a sheet, and shake till it would make your heart ache. Then she 'd drink some strong coffee and put on that smile she always wore, and go back to hold on to him some more. His nerve, if he ever had any, had gone to pot, and he hollered and cried and begged for morphine through the entire night.

"When the captain saw him next morning he

said the only chance he had to pull through was blood transfusion. You ought to have seen Mrs. Merton's face! She just jumped at the chance.

" 'Take mine!' she said. 'I 'm lots stronger than I look.'

" 'I 'll have to make a test first,' said the captain. 'All blood is divided in four groups, and for transfusion, in order to prevent clotting, the patient and the one giving the blood must be in the same group. Is there any one else willing to volunteer?'

"I and Baker offered, and then, to everybody's surprise, a strange voice spoke up from the end of the bed. If you believe me, it was the Nut! He was standing on his crutches, facing us, but not looking at the captain.

" 'Count me in,' he sort of mumbled.

"Nobody paid any attention to him, and he went back to his bed again.

"The captain pricked Baker's finger and squeezed out a drop of blood, then he pricked mine, then Mrs. Merton's, and went off to the laboratory. When he come back he said there

was only one that was in group two, and that was Mrs. Merton's.

"It was still as death in the ward except for Mert's heavy breathing. All of a sudden the bed-clothes went off Number Thirteen and the Nut was on his crutches again.

" 'Say, the kid 'll need her to look after him,' he says kind of wild-like. 'Go on and try me.'

" 'Get back in bed, Harding!' said the captain, taking a step toward him. 'We will manage this without you.'

" 'But you don't need to,' Harding kept on, like he was talking to just anybody. 'It ain't right to let a woman do this when all us men are here.'

"I looked at the captain to see if he wanted me to shut him up, but the captain shook his head. It was just the barest motion, but the Nut caught it.

" 'I know what 's the matter with you all,' he says, his voice getting higher and higher. 'You all 'low I 'm daffy. But my blood 's as good as anybody's, and it 's mine to give. You ain't got no right to keep me from doin' it.'

"His hair was all tumbled up, and his eyes were shining like a cat's in the dark. Every patient in the ward was looking first at him and then at the captain, waiting for the lightning to strike. But the captain was watching him not like a superior officer, but like a doctor.

" 'Harding,' he said in that nice way that made everybody like him, 'I want you to control yourself. We appreciate your offer, but we can't take it. Get back to your bed.'

"But the Nut hitched himself along from cot to cot till he was up close, then instead of blustering, like he had been, he began to beg low and fast:

" 'I ain't crazy, Captain,' he said. 'I been fakin' to git out of the court martial. You see, I was in seven hospitals in France, and I been in three over here. The thought of being shut up ten more years in prison was too much for me. But I 'll stand my trial sooner than see that lady let in fer a thing like this. You take my test, Captain; it can't do no harm just to try me.'

"He stood there begging and pleading, and

holding out that big red mit of his, and there was n't a fellow in the ward that did n't want to shake it.

"Well, the captain made his blood test, and found it was in group two.

" 'If I let you give your blood, Harding,' he said, 'it means that I think you are sane enough to make the decision.'

" 'Yes, sir,' says the Nut, as eager as if he was asking for a pardon.

" 'And you know,' went on the captain, 'what you are up against if the medical board passes on your sanity?'

"Harding gave a quick look at Mrs. Merton and nodded his head.

"She was kneeling beside Mert's bed, her face as white as it 'll ever be when she 's dead. Every now and then Mert would cry out, but the cries was getting weaker all the time, and we could see he was pretty near all in.

"The captain had gone over to the window, where he stood staring out through the heavy wire netting, like he was trying to make up his mind.

"'If they don't decide soon,' Mrs. Merton says to me, 'it 'll be too late.'

"I did n't know the Nut heard her, but he did.

"'Tell him I ain't crazy,' he said, catching hold of the nurse's arm. 'Honest to God, I ain't. I 'm naturally backward, and I ain't never had no learnin', but there ain't nothin' the matter with my senses.' Then he turned to the captain. 'Can't you ast me some questions some way to prove it? Can't you do something quick? Else 'n she says it 'll be too late.'

"The captain looked him straight in the eye, but he did n't answer, and the Nut went on:

"'I can't think of nothin' to prove it to you lessen I go like the birds.'

"'What birds?' says the captain, and I could see the boys exchanging looks from cot to cot.

"'Where I come from,' says the Nut. 'I growed up on a shanty-boat down in the Florida everglades. The only thing I ever could do right good was to go like the birds and the varmints. Want to hear me?'

"I can see him now, that big lop-sided fellow, standing there on his crutches making sounds like all the birds you ever heard in your life. First it was a wild turkey, then a partridge, then a deer; then he 'd imitate one of those old green turtles and follow it up with a screech-owl. He could show how they went when they was mad and when they was glad and when they was courtin', and all the time he was doing it he was watching the captain's face like a hungry dog waiting for a bone.

" 'That 'll do, Harding,' said the captain, 'I am convinced.'

"After that no time was lost in hustling him and Mert on to wheeling-tables and getting them over to the operating-room. I was detailed to take the Nut and stay with him till it was time to bring him back.

"I never saw such a change in anybody in my life. He talked a streak to Mrs. Merton, and kept on a-boosting her up right to the door of the operating-room, where they stopped her.

" 'You rest easy in your mind,' he says to

her the last thing. 'I been mean in other ways, but I got clean blood.'

"Well, they painted his arm with iodine and then give him a shot of cocaine. That was all. Then they made a slit just inside the bend of his elbow. Gee! It was a hole, pretty nearly two inches long. Then they yanked out a vein and inserted a glass tube.

"It made me sort of sick, but the Nut lay there a-looking at it like it belonged to somebody else.

"Then Mert was wheeled in, looking more dead than alive and scared to death.

" 'Brace up, Kid,' says the Nut. 'It ain't nothin' after the first prick. You 'll make it all right.'

"Then they opened up Mert's artery, stuck in a tube and connected 'em up.

" 'Fifty cubic centimeters,' says the captain, calling out the measure of the blood.

"Mert was moaning weaker and weaker.

" 'One hundred cubic centimeters,' said the captain; 'two hundred.'

"A man in a white gown, with rubber gloves and a white cap, was holding a sponge soaked in concentrated ammonia under the Nut's nose, but the Nut was n't noticing him. He was looking anxious at Mert.

"The color had begun to come back into the boy's face, and his lips was turning from purple to pink.

" 'Three hundred cubic centimeters,' called the captain, and the Nut's eyelids began to bat.

"The captain told me and an orderly to lift the foot of the operating-table.

" 'Four hundred,' says the captain, bending over the Nut. 'Work your fingers, man, as long as you can.'

"The Nut sighed like he was about all in, but he kept on working his fingers to show he was still game.

" 'Four-fifty,' called the captain.

"I looked at Mert. It was like a miracle; he had not only come back to life, but he could smile.

" 'Five hundred. That 's all,' snapped out the captain as the Nut's big hand made a last

final effort to give the signal before it fell limp on the table.

"We hustled 'em both back on the wheeling-tables and got the sheets over 'em, and just as we started into the corridor a nurse ran out and said:

" 'Only one of them goes back to the prison ward. The kid goes up to 4-C.'"

"Mrs. Merton, who was bending over Mert, straightened up at that, and her quiet eyes was on fire for once.

" 'You wait here!' she commanded, like she was a brigadier-general. I don't know what line of talk she handed out to the captain, but a minute later, when she come out of the operating-room, she handed me a slip of paper. 'Take both patients to 4-C,' it said.

"So I wheeled the unconscious Nut up to 4-C, and the other orderlies and Mrs. Merton brought up the procession, and I hustled on back to 8-C.

"What became of them? Lord, how do I know? You never hear what becomes of anybody out here at the base.

"Mert and the Nut may both be serving time out at Leavenworth for all I know. But one thing 's certain, the Nut 's never going to lack for a friend as long as Mrs. Merton 's living."

FRANCELLA

By Cale Young Rice

FRANCELLA

ONLY those who had experienced things deeper than our senses dream of could understand Francella Blake. Many merely heard of her visions with wonder or surprise during the fifteen years of her clairvoyance. Yet all who knew her were moved to a profound reverence for an end of them so great, though heartbreaking.

The power Francella possessed, of seeing more than others, did not come to her in childhood, nor in the incalculable period of adolescence. Perhaps no striking manifestation of it really occurred until she met Herbert Tully, late in her twenty-fourth year. It was then, at least, that her friends became a little fearful of what they called her strange "intuitions." They found that eyes which were large, brown and preternaturally soft with kindness, could nevertheless seem like crystals in which reflections of their own inner lives floated by. That

they should therefore have attributed the beginning of Francella's ascendency over Herbert to a similar influence is only natural—in the light of what happened.

The two, it seems, first met on a visit to an Exmoor country house in the September of 1899. Herbert, a captain in the —— Regiment, was large, blonde and moustached, and he was mentally so far from the unusual that his gentle eyes always stared hard before they comprehended the simplest subtlety. Nothing would have seemed more unlikely than that any attraction should arise between the pair.

What strangely chanced, therefore, but proved again that it is the unexpected which happens. A fox-hunt had been arranged, and Francella alone remained at home. Herbert, a keen hunter, followed the hounds and was recklessly riding the quarry almost to the death, when suddenly, incomprehensibly, on the distant moor, Francella's voice came to him. It said, very clearly, "Don't help kill the poor thing!" And so amazed was he that he desisted and went back to the house. There he

found Francella waiting for him, and heard her say with lips and eyes still touched by trance, "I knew you were kind, I knew! I knew! . . . It is cruel to kill!"

Whether the incident seemed a miracle to him, or whether he had hunted through custom —just as he had gone into the army because it was the usual thing for a younger son of no proclivities—is not known. While the house party lasted, however, it is certain that he hunted no more, but followed Francella about the place as humbly and reverently as he had ever been followed by his most beloved hound.

Then, a month later, their engagement was announced; and soon after came the wedding. The house they chose for their future home was not on Exmoor nor in London, but was a small cottage by the sea at Sidmouth,—a cottage with a garden whose flowers and birds seemed as remote from the world as Francella herself.

Only marital failure, and perhaps tragedy, was predicted of all this. For though, strangely enough, the marriage seemed to be a love one, what had either to give the other?

Had not Francella, fearful perhaps of living too much in the world of her visions, merely grasped at Herbert's materiality in marrying him? And had not he been merely over-influenced by her strange ability to enter the psychic space of his mind—a space he had not before been aware of as existing?

Likely as this seemed, their life at Sidmouth was nevertheless happy. Herbert, who said nothing more about hunting, nor about Francella's belief that all killing was cruelty, watched her as she went about the garden, with affectionate, brooding eyes. And it was on one such occasion that he rose, and walking to where she sat under a white rose tree said, "I—I 'm going to give up my commission, Francella."

Her reply, "I knew you would, dear," was spoken after a moment of silence. Her eyes were turned toward the gray Channel, but they were really looking inward on the mysterious sea whose thought waves were constantly breaking back of her mind. "I knew you would," she repeated tenderly, "for war would mean killing one's fellow men."

Yet at this pass a stronger power than Francella's stepped in to play a part. Before Herbert could carry out his determination to resign from the service, and indeed while the two were more deeply enjoying the sense of unity his decision had brought, he was called to London. There he was ordered to prepare to go to South Africa; and then, before either could realize what had happened, he had embarked for his destination.

Through the Boer War that followed Francella sat in the garden like one stunned. The birds would gather about her, eager for food she had brought, but often as not they would have to pick it from her unconscious hand. For suddenly she would quiver, and then, motionlessly oblivious to all around her, would sit in a trance of listening. If her friends chanced to be present at such times, or, happening in, found her so, she would say with clairvoyant distress, in answer to their solicitation, "There is a battle to-day. It is terrible."

In this she was always right. The news reports the following day would tell of fierce fight-

ing and heavy casualties. But as to how she had known it was so Francella would only reply, "Perhaps it is my anxiety for Herbert; it enables me to hear the guns." And always she would add, with tears of solace in her eyes, "He escaped without wounds."

Yet it could be seen that this comfort only brought her partial relief. After such occasions she would not sleep, and the next day her maid, Hester, would tell visitors that she was ill. Her distress, it became known, was due to the knowledge that Herbert, though unwounded, had killed human beings—Herbert, her beloved!

Before the war ended she had become as frail as a wraith; so frail that she would sometimes shrink from the hungry eyes of a sea-gull that chanced to leave the cliffs and cry over her garden. That she could keep up seemed incredible, but she did so until the war's end, and until Herbert, thin, tanned and more inarticulate than ever came back. Then pathetically flushed and looking gladly, passionately into his eyes, she had kissed him and succumbed; to be

borne away in a delirium that lasted many days.

By her sat Herbert always; and always he had heard her lips murmuring, "I could n't tell him not to kill. . . . He would have heard—I know he would . . . but I could n't! He was a soldier and they would have thought him a coward!" And the words caused Herbert to gaze into her dark delirious eyes with a tenderness past expression. For in his dumb serious way he understood the anguish she had endured in refraining from calling to him, there on the kopjies, as she had called to him that day on the moor. He understood, too, how tragic the call would have been.

When she recovered, happier times awaited them. He resigned his commission and purchased land near the town. For with men of Herbert's type daily intimacy with the soil and freedom of the air is a primal necessity. Francella, too, must have realized the perilous edge to which they had been brought, for she strove to avoid wholly any yielding to or exercise of her power of vision. Both tacitly bent

every effort toward finding simple interests and mutual sympathies.

They would go for long walks over Peak Hill, by moor-path or down. They would amuse themselves by the sea under the high red cliffs of Salcombe Hill, watching the tide or the gulls or the slant grey sails of the fisher-boats. There were excursions to Exeter—of which the cathedral is still the timeworn heart. And always there was the garden at home, where every visitor felt so peculiarly the beauty of their relationship. It was impossible, indeed, to sit for an hour on the green terrace of the garden without getting an almost preternatural sense that life could be made harmonious. Rook-caw or lark-song but added to it. The very fragrance of the evergreens in winter, or of the flowers in summer, seemed to debar all discord, and the wild things lost all watchful fear or suspicion.

Not until the Spring of 1914 did any change come to alter the mellow and beautiful atmosphere of this life. Then one day when Herbert came from a solitary climb over Salcombe

downs, a climb high above the sea and floating white gull-flakes, he was met on his return by Hester in deep agitation:

"She 's wandering about the garden, sir, like a lost soul," said the maid. "She 's done it for hours. I can't get 'er to come in. She wrings 'er 'ands, like, and puts them before 'er eyes, as if to shut hout something that nobody helse sees."

Herbert went to her, and, having led her gently into the house, knelt by the deep hearth chair in which he ensconced her. "What is it, dear?" he asked. "What is it? Will you tell me?"

She replied pitifully that she could not. She only knew that strange forces had begun to sweep over her, forces of premonition and anguish. "It was," she said, "as if I felt the unborn pain of millions of hearts blown to me; as if the air were charged with myriads of yet unuttered cries."

This state of mind, which might have been expected to pass, did not. Rather it became more acute, and, in the days that followed, the

distress of it was so keen that Herbert persuaded her to permit him to send for a physician.

The specialist who ran down from London hurriedly heard her story as far as Herbert could give it, and nodded with non-committal omniscience. After consideration he decided that the long suspension of her subconscious gift of vision might be responsible for the disturbance, "causing acute subconscious complexes," and advised full mental freedom to exercise her powers if she chose. But physical rest in bed was also recommended, and no exciting or stimulating news from the outside.

In her room she lay, then, through the early days of June, her flowers and birds forgotten. Always she was listening, always looking, for that which others could not see or hear. Only crimson roses, among the flowers brought to her, would attract her attention, and from those she would shrink, at times, with a look of inexplicable horror. Of the wind, blowing across the garden from the east, she would

say, "I never knew before that it is really made of human moans."

Then suddenly one morning—it was June 28th—she woke with a cry, and became very still. The next day she watched Herbert open his newspaper, when Hester brought it in. She saw his face but did not ask any question then or through the strange, strained, unspeakable days that followed until Germany broke violently and bloodily through Belgium, and England declared war.

After that her paroxysms of premonition became quieter but more profound. She was told nothing, but did she know all? Back of the shudderings that racked her, were there visions of the vast calamity that was preparing for the world?

She watched Herbert from her white bed, watched him with eyes that asked for no news—that must, indeed, have had no need of inquiry. Especially when he would run up to London unexpectedly and return, would her look be on him, always with transcendent but troubled comprehension.

Then one day in August he came back after a longer stay than usual. He had been recalled —though he did not mean to tell her—to the service. He would have to embark for France in three days.

He told her instead, and truly though clumsily enough, that his family's affairs were in straits and needed his attention. He said he would have to go away from her for a while, for three months maybe, and that she must get wholly well in the meantime, as he had contrived great plans for them on his return.

She smiled at him—as a Phoenician mother might at her child struggling to get onto the altar of Moloch—and bade him good-bye with tearless self-control. She did not give him any caution or bid him write. She only smiled—until he was gone.

Then she rose, called Hester, and what was to be the supreme struggle with the power within her began.

"I know," she said, "where he is gone. I know of the war. The blood and agony of it flow through each moment of my mind. But I

must blind myself, I must seize my soul away, or when I see *him* there too . . ."

She broke off, for at the very moment a vision swept her, a vision of armies driven brokenly backward, out across the Channel; of men slaughtering and slain.

"I must, I must!" she cried, pushing it away from her eyes. "We must work constantly, always; for if I should betray him now . . ."

Hester took her to the garden, brought her material for making the garments that would be so sorely needed, and their days began. Never did the maid leave her mistress, during waking hours, and at night a sleeping powder closed the gates of Francella's mind and stood guard against the intrusion of the perilous power of seeing.

A week went by, a week of warships on the horizon-line and of grave news reports revealing the world's rushing tragedy. Francella shut all from her, but it could be seen hourly that the pressure of visions to get into her mind was unendurable. She would push through them with her hands as a swimmer

under the sea, closing her eyes fast; and once she cried out for the oblivion that morphia might give.

Then the hour came, the ultimate crisis. She had gone to bed and to sleep. There was no moon, only starlight sifting with whispery faintness through her open window. The wind was blowing straight from France.

She woke with a smothered cry that did not waken Hester in the next room, and there it was before her, the vision of all visions that she most feared to face. Herbert was standing with his men in the darkness behind a little hill. They were waiting to attack and were unaware of the fact that they were far outnumbered by the enemy force before them. They were tired, worn, driven, almost despairing.

She sat up in her bed staring at the inner apparition. War was cruelty, murder, she knew it. Herbert was about to slay—or be slain. But should she cry out to him; should she, with all the power in her, call him off—at whatever cost? Was there nothing else . . . nothing . . . to prevent her?

The moments passed agonizingly. She saw him in the dark vision look at his watch and prepare to give the order. She could stop him, she must, she would—all this was revealed in the delirium that followed—she had but to speak.

The struggle through which she passed in those few moments is immeasurable to the normal mind, but the end was as unexpected as the struggle was incalculable.

For just as she was on the point of speaking the word that would withhold him, just as she saw him hesitate as if he expected it, something more powerful than her abhorrence of bloodshed, or than her fear for his life, seized her. Was it the instinct of her race? Was it a realization of the need of humanity transcending lesser rights and wrongs? Was it the very urge of the divinity that shapes all ends?

None can say. But that it seized her and lifted her to a sudden ecstasy of courage and faith, the testimony of Hester, who chanced to awake, revealed. What she did was not to call him back. She was heard to cry there in the

unbreaking dawn, "Charge, Herbert! Charge! . . . Oh . . . Charge!" Then words came that told she had seen him obey, had seen him strike with a force so inspired as to be irresistible.

To her mistress's bed this cry brought Hester in quick terror. She found her there in the delirium that lasted but an hour, for the strain had been too great. Francella herself had given the order to kill—and Francella was dead.

Herbert, only slightly wounded, was cabled; but he could not come and he knew that her last words to him meant that he should stay at his post. Six months later he led another charge, his last, in a battle to which no word from Francella came.

A PARTNERSHIP MEMORY

By Alice Hegan Rice

A PARTNERSHIP MEMORY

THERE was but one bond of sympathy that could exist between the two men, yet neither seemed willing to be the first to allude to the subject uppermost in the mind of each. They had been playing chess in the Captain's stateroom the better part of a long, dull afternoon. Through the open door the sea stretched gray and passive, and the decks were wet with an intermittent drizzle of rain.

It was Richards who first opened the way to mutual confidences:

"Do you remember the last time we played chess in this room, Captain?" he asked, replacing the pawns in the box with fastidious precision.

"On your last crossing, I suppose," said the Captain casually, "ten or was it eleven years ago?"

"Eleven years in June. 'A white night full of stars' and the coast lights of China just

glimmering on the horizon. A certain fair lady's last night on board and you and I playing for the privilege of sharing it with her."

"Oh! You mean Nina Starling?" The Captain looked up quizzically. "I ought to remember; I won."

"Yes, you won," admitted Richards.

"That sounds very much like a sigh of regret. In the light of recent lurid events it ought to be a sigh of exultation."

"Recent events might not have occurred had I had that last inning."

The Captain laid a heavy, bronzed hand on his shoulder. "My dear fellow, if ever the Fates were kind to a man they were to you that night. You and Nina Starling had met for your mutual destruction. I was shoved in for a buffer. I don't deny that I was as hard hit as you were, only I was used to it. I 'd been hit before."

"Not by Mrs. Starling!"

"No, not by Nina Starling."

For some moments the two sat silent, smoking, the Captain a bluff handsome man of

forty-five, his companion a few years his junior, slender, austere, wearing the uniform of a Major in the United States Army. The ashes of an old romance, thus stirred, evidently revealed some live embers, by the light of which each was travelling back through the years.

The Captain was the first to recover himself: "The difference between us was that you went into it blindfolded, and I went in with my eyes open. I 'd known Nina ever since she was a youngster. They lived in Honolulu, you know, and I took her mother over the first trip I was in command. An awful fool she was too; neglected the girl shamefully until she discovered that she was a winning card, then she played her up for all she was worth."

"Did you know Starling?"

"Never saw him. He only lived a couple of years after they were married. In fact, I never saw Nina again until she was on her way back to Honolulu with her small boy, on the very trip of which you speak."

"Poor little Bobby! You know his tragic end?"

"Oh, yes, the papers were full of it. Nina had about as much business with a son as Cleopatra."

"And yet she adored the boy."

"Oh, yes. He was her one permanent affair. The rest of us were transients. She entertained us royally when we came and promptly forgot us when we departed. It was pretty rum that in the end she should have been Bob's undoing. But then she was everybody's undoing that she came in contact with."

"On the contrary," Richards said, "we were her undoing. We asked too much of her. We demanded the impossible and she tried to give it!"

The Captain shook his head. "She is the female of the species," he contended. "She goes after what she wants, and if she cannot reach it by a straight course, she takes a crooked one. You would probably call it finesse."

Richards considered his slender well-shaped hands gravely. "I think I should call it the instinct of acquiescence. She is a creature of

sudden fire, with a passionate desire to do the thing required of her for the person she loves, regardless of circumstances. Life confuses and baffles her. I admit she is politic, and perhaps not always straightforward, but her motive is never self-interest; she is always trying to get something for somebody else. You must admit that she is the most exquisitely generous person you ever knew."

"Oh, I 'll admit anything good you want to say about her! The Lord knows she was kind to me. When she came back to Honolulu to live after her second marriage, she used to slip down to the dock whenever I made the port. I can see her now, as smart as a little white yacht under full sail, pretending to be interested in the arriving passengers when all the time she was wirelessing me on the bridge to hurry up, that her motor was waiting and that I was to take lunch with her. By George! that girl could say more with her eyes and one finger than most women can say with their tongues."

"Were you ever in her home?"

"Many a time. They had a wonderful place

down below Waikiki—white beach, blue sea, and palms—you know, the kind of thing Honolulu specializes in. Well, she would treat me like a Grand Mogul. Nothing too good for me. She remembered the things I liked to eat, and the kind of cigars I liked to smoke. She gave me a taste of what a real home can be, and when my time was up, she 'd run me down to the dock herself and give me a God-speed that would keep me warmed up for days to come. I tell you a man has to live at sea half his life to know what a thing like that means."

"But the Baron?" asked Richards. "From what I have heard of the gentleman, he was not one to give his wife free rein."

"Oh, von Sternman liked men to admire Nina. It gave him the satisfaction of knowing that he possessed what others wanted. And Nina never teased him. She 'd lie to him, to be sure, and get him out of the way at times, but that was only to bring about more comfortable results. She wanted him to be happy, too. That was her religion; she wanted everybody to be happy."

"I suppose I was the exception that proved the rule," said Richards grimly. "The only cruel thing I ever knew her to do was to keep me dangling between heaven and hell from San Francisco to Hong Kong, and then to marry the Baron as soon as she got to Germany."

"Well, von Sternman happened to be on the spot when she landed, and I imagine he lost no time in pressing his suit. You see, you and I had made it rather an exciting voyage for her ladyship. When we dropped out, life became too dull. She could not bear to be out of a job."

"I did not drop out," Richards protested. "If I had n't been under orders to report in the Philippines, the devil himself could n't have stopped me. That was what I wanted to tell her that last night on board; as it was I lost my chance. I had to catch a steamer early the next morning for Manila, our letters miscarried, and she married the Baron."

There was a long pause, while Richards lit a fresh cigarette and the Captain idly fingered the chessmen. It was not a pause of finality, however; it was but a halt on the brink of the

subject during which each looked back on the past through his own particular vista.

"Did she seem to care about von Sternman?" Richards brought out at last.

"Well, it 's hard to say. She made over him, flattered him, spoiled him, and fooled him whenever it pleased her to. Of course she was inordinately proud of his position and his brains. He was a brilliant man, but hard as tacks. She spent a good part of her time explaining away his rudenesses."

"Yes," said Richards with absent eyes and slightly pursed lips, "I can see her in the rôle. She had a gift for interpreting her friends to the world. She accorded herself the privilege of making the translation not too literal, and the result was always more charming than the original."

"In this case it could n't have been worse. The Baron, with all his good looks and grand air, was a boor. I think Nina secretly feared him."

"Feared him?" Richards looked up sharply.

"Yes, at heart I think she always feared him.

He had all a German's ideas about women, and if he had ever caught her in one of her escapades it would have gone hard with her. In fact I think that was just what did happen in the end."

"What happened," said Richards bitterly, "was that he made her the tool for his dirty work. What the poor girl has suffered during these past few years is something I don't like to think of."

"Nor I," agreed the Captain. "I did all I could for her. When war was declared in 1914 she was all in a flutter to get back to the States. She offered a dozen excuses; von Sternman was ill with malaria and had to get away from the Islands; she wanted to see her people; Bob wanted to enter a military school, etc. There was n't an extra stateroom on board, but I turned out of my cabin for them. I let that big scoundrel of a German have my bed, all because Nina asked me to. And ten days after he landed in San Francisco, he forged a passport and got away to Europe."

"Yes," said Richards, "it was not long after

that that I saw Mrs. Starling— She will always be 'Mrs. Starling' to me. We met in a New York hotel, in an elevator. It was the first time I 'd seen her since we left this steamer seven years before, yet you would have thought we had not been parted twenty-four hours. She took me right into her confidence and poured out all her troubles."

"About the Baron?"

"No, about Bob. It seems he had set his heart on going to West Point. He had worked for years toward that end. His appointment was all but secured when the Baron's departure became known, and the whole affair was trembling in the balance. Bob was beside himself with rage and disappointment, and Mrs. Starling had been moving heaven and earth to get him his heart's desire. I went up to their apartment and thrashed out the whole matter with them. Bob was a stunning chap, built for the army, every inch of him. He was too loyal to his mother to express himself openly concerning the Baron, but I never saw more concentrated hatred than he showed in his face

every time his name was mentioned. I remember how he paced the floor, declaring that it was n't fair for his life to be smashed like that, that if he failed to get the appointment it would be a blot on his character he could never live down. And Mrs. Starling, white as a sheet, kept saying, 'You are going to get it, Bob. I got you into this and I am going to get you out of it. The Major and I will arrange some way.' "

"And the Major did?" the Captain threw in sarcastically.

"No, she did it herself, though of course I pulled a few wires in the War Department, and introduced her to Senator Gray, upon whose decision the whole matter hinged. It was a difficult thing to arrange, for he refused point blank to give a personal interview, as he was leaving town in a couple of hours."

"I 'll wager Nina got the interview."

"Well, as a matter of fact, she did. He talked with her for an hour, then asked her to lunch with him. When I called at the apartment in the afternoon Bob told me Senator

Gray had thought it best for her to go down to Washington with him to clinch the matter."

"So that was how Bob got his commission!" The Captain leaned back in his chair and smiled. "There is nobody like her. She 's so frail and yielding and yet so irresistible. It is n't merely her beauty. I 've seen a dozen women I thought were prettier. It 's something more, something a blind man would feel. You say she has not changed much?"

"Well, I suppose she has," Richards admitted; "her figure perhaps more than her coloring."

"Naturally. A clever woman finds it easier to camouflage her complexion than to camouflage her figure."

"She can't change the color of her eyes," said Richards coolly.

"Those ridiculously blue eyes!" The Captain laughed. "I used to get an electric shock every time I looked into them. After all, I think that is Nina's chief charm; she is so terrifically aware of you—that is, when she is n't aware of some one else."

"It is we who are aware," urged Richards. "You know those lines, 'The innocent moon that nothing does but shine, moves all the slumbering surges of the world.' Mrs. Starling is like a radiant lighthouse against which poor befuddled gulls beat out their brains."

"Here 's one wise old eagle that did n't!" The Captain chuckled. "A lighthouse means keep off the rocks to me, and you bet I have. She is the only woman I was ever afraid of in my life. But you were telling me of her mission to Washington. Did you see her again?"

"No. I was down on the border that winter; but I heard of her. She took a house at West Point, to be near Bob, and I hear she had the whole Post crazy about her."

"Yes, I should n't wonder if that was the reason Bob got first honor; all the other cadets were probably wasting their time flirting with his mother."

"His mother was doing everything in her power for him," said Richards stiffly; "her ambition was as great as his."

"Oh, I would n't call it ambition on her part.

She just wanted Bob to have what he wanted. If he had set his heart on being a burglar she would have helped him to it just the same. What did the officers seem to think of Bob?"

"There was but one thing to think. I tell you, Bob Starling was everything a soldier ought to be. One of the instructors told me he was considered the most promising man that had passed through the Academy in years. That was the tragedy of it."

"And when did the complication with the Baron begin? He evidently lost no time in putting Nina to work as soon as he reached Berlin."

"I imagine the scoundrel was using her from the first. The letters dated from 1915, but it was not until after we went into the war that things began to leak out. You see, the letters were not in code or anything of that kind; they would have passed without suspicion anywhere. All Mrs. Starling did was to forward them to the German Ambassador, who was an old friend of von Sternman's. How could she know that they contained secret information?"

"She probably did n't," agreed the Captain, "but it must have struck her as strange that her husband would ask her to send his private letters to her, containing nothing whatever of an official nature, to the German Embassy at Washington."

Richards' face flushed: "I did not realize that I was discussing Mrs. Starling with one of her enemies. I took it for granted that you shared my belief in her innocence."

"Nina innocent! Why, I can as soon think of Methuselah being young! My dear man, you do her an injustice."

"The Court evidently shared my opinion," said Richards. "No stones were left unturned by the Prosecuting Attorney to convict her of conspiracy. Everything was against her—the fact that we had just gone into the war; that public opinion was flaming against any evidence of pro-Germanism; that she did not deny having forwarded the letters. Yet she was completely exonerated."

"Do you wonder?" asked Captain Sherry. "I knew it was all up with the jury when I saw

she was going to conduct her own case. 'The Beautiful Baroness von Sternman, a loyal American citizen, made the tool of her unscrupulous German husband!' I can see the headlines now. I 've got a copy of one of the papers around here somewhere. I kept it because it had rather a good picture of Nina."

He opened a desk drawer and, after some fumbling, took out a newspaper clipping carefully protected between cardboards. The two men looked at the picture for some moments in silence, and one of them smiled with his eyes, and one of them smiled with his lips. The Captain was the first to speak:

"Perfect stage setting," he said. "Belasco could not have done better. And a situation worthy of Nina's genius. Can't you see her now taking in the whole bunch right down to the case-hardened reporters?"

"And you alone refuse her even the benefit of a doubt!" exclaimed Richards hotly. "I should think that the fact that she brought divorce proceedings against von Sternman the moment she discovered the truth, would

be sufficient guarantee of her innocence."

Captain Sherry's eyes twinkled: "A superb *coup de grâce!* Nothing could have climaxed the situation so dramatically and so convincingly. It satisfied everybody, apparently, but Uncle Sam. Unfortunately he is less susceptible to feminine charms than other men. Even though he let her off, he decided that he did not want an officer in his army whose step-father was on the Kaiser's staff, and whose mother had been tried for a German spy. I understand that everything possible was done at West Point to let Bob down easy, but you can't pitch a man out of the window without breaking something."

"In this case it was the boy's heart," said Richards. "It happened in May, you see, and he was to have been graduated in June. You would have needed to know him in recent years to understand just what it meant to him. An honor man for three consecutive years, and patriotic to his finger tips. I don't blame him for doing what he did. I 'd have done it in his place."

"A rotten business," sighed the Captain. "I have forgotten the details. It was Nina who found him, was n't it?"

"Yes. She got back to West Point the night it happened, went to his room and found him still in his uniform with a bullet through his heart, and beside him a small American flag on which was written, 'For my country.' "

They sat silent, each closeted in his own reflections. Then Richards said:

"Such a tragedy would have crushed a woman of coarser fiber, but Mrs. Starling bent to it like a flower in a hurricane. She felt the beauty of his death and the perfection of his sacrifice, just as she felt von Sternman's position and what he did for his country. Her letter to me, at the time, was one of the noblest things I ever read. She did not blame anybody. There was no bitterness nor rebellion, nor recrimination, only the most exquisite understanding and acquiescence. She has a wonderful soul, a—"

Then realizing how warmly he was speaking, he rose abruptly and pushed back his chair:

"After all, it 's a subject upon which you and I could never agree. We have been foolish to discuss it."

"Not at all," said the Captain; "we have passed a very pleasant afternoon. By the way, I suppose you know of course that she has married again."

Richards stopped abruptly in the doorway. "Mrs. Starling married?" he repeated dully.

"Yes, I saw it in a German paper in Hong Kong last month. She managed to get over to Berlin by way of South America, shipped as a stewardess on a German boat, and reentered the ranks of the German nobility."

"You don't mean that she has married another baron?" asked Richards aghast.

Captain Sherry's bluff laugh rang out heartily. "Oh, Lord, no!" he said; "it 's the same one!"

ARCHIE'S RELAPSE

By Cale Young Rice

ARCHIE'S RELAPSE

I

ARCHIE DUPONT TRIGG, being eighteen, considered himself to have arrived at man's estate. He determined therefore to forego the possible delights of love for the sake of his career. As the stage was the sphere of life he meant to honor with his genius, he also considered the advisability of changing his name; for no member of the highly respectable Trigg family had ever before turned Thespian. Such a change, however, seemed a pity. It would mean devoting his prospective greatness to making another name famous—and it would also probably be quite useless. For would not a worshipping public be sure to search out every detail of his history from birth down? And might not the changed name merely look as if he had been ashamed of his "art"?

At nineteen Archie slightly relaxed the love regulation. One who goes on the stage, he told his friends, should have experience in love.

You can pick up lovers' tricks of course in the schools of acting. But after all it is of prime importance, if you must assume an emotion, to have really experienced it yourself. You can get more of it into your voice, you know, and your tone production does n't sound quite so falsetto. To have the ease of a man of the world at embracing and kissing is also an asset for entrance to a school of dramatic art. Indeed if Archie had known just what cosmopolitan gallantry meant, he would probably have admitted that an amount of it might, you know, be serviceable to any great actor.

Archie's first surrender of an amatory nature soon followed. This surrender was not to just anybody, however, but to Miss Julia Marlowe. Archie reasoned that an artist's first passion should be great and hopeless, and his choice of Miss Marlowe seemed to make this quite probable. Such a passion should also be for another artist—for how could one hold imaginary love conversations with a mere ordinary girl?

Miss Marlowe was playing *Juliet* in Archie's

city when he arrived at his decision, so it behooved him to observe the performance carefully. He told all his friends the next day that his chief criticism was of the Romeo—who was very poor—particularly in the love scenes. To enforce his criticism he learned the balcony scene, that he might illustrate it. Unfortunately the only appreciation he got from his audience was the rough-neck cry, "Cut it out, Archie!" and this made it necessary for him to confine his histrionic virtuosity to his bedroom window—and the moon.

The melancholy sense of loss Archie felt when Miss Marlowe unknowingly departed to her next engagement was gratifying. Artistic loneliness, however, urged him to further experience; so whenever he passed his girl friends he began to cast about for another on whom to bestow his devotions. Miss Marlowe's picture still reigned on his dresser,—for one's first great passion should always be remembered with reverence. But now, when he looked at it, other—and younger—faces began to intervene.

Of these there were two that appeared most frequently; one crowned by blonde hair, the other by dark. This made it important for him to take the next step most wisely. The question was clearly whether comedy or tragedy should be the proximate stage of his development. If comedy, then Elsie Courtnay, with golden braids, should be his choice; if tragedy, Mona Jarvis.

As tragedy had already been given one opportunity through Miss Marlowe, Elsie was chosen. Her greater beauty may have had something to do with this; but not all. For Archie had watched her and particularly liked the ease with which she handled her other suitors. It was like Portia's! Which suggested that perhaps she might be thinking of going on the stage—and in that case they could star jointly! Blazing posters therefore immediately appeared to Archie; posters lighting the land from New York to San Francisco with the words: "Mr. Archibald Trigg, the great Shakespearian actor, supported by Miss Elsie Courtnay, in Repertoire."

This sublime vision made Archie condescend slightly to his mother when, looking palely interesting, he came down to breakfast the morning after his decision.

"Are you well, Archie dear?" Mrs. Trigg asked with quiet solicitude. And when Archie replied "quite well," with the brevity which befits those who are occupied with great purposes, she merely lifted a brow with smiling comprehension and continued to read the paper.

Archie having eaten—merely for the sake of keeping in health for his art—returned to his room to take the first step of writing to Elsie concerning a call that evening. At this epistolary effort he failed to satisfy himself; for the fact that Elsie was two years older than he and "went with older men" made the matter difficult. Two years were not much, to be sure, and these older men were doubtless really immature as compared with him, for *he* had the mentality that solitary idealization of an art gives! Nevertheless Archie could not decide through the day to send the note.

At six o'clock he determined uneasily to call

Elsie up and make the engagement over the 'phone. Miss Courtnay *was* at home, he was told by the maid, and *would* come to the 'phone. Archie felt a little sallower than usual while he waited, and decided that his qualms of uneasiness must be due to the first symptoms of love. When, therefore, Elsie's light irresponsible "hello" came over the wire, he was convinced by the violent trembling of his limbs and by his stammering tongue that love had already taken an indubitable hold on him.

"This is Ar—Archie Trigg, Miss Courtnay—Elsie," he said, "I—I want to ask if I may call this evening?"

The immediate, "What for?" which came back was an unguarded expression of surprise manifestly unflattering. And that the pretty speaker of the words as immediately laughed at the *faux pas* did not wholly clear matters.

Nevertheless when Archie managed to convey that he wished to pay his respects, he was rewarded with another apologetic laugh from the other end, and with, "Oh, Mr. Trigg—Archie—do come. I shall be delighted to see you."

Feeling that he must show Elsie from the first that he was a mature man, Archie sent flowers —and went. He was ushered into a pillowy parlor where he found two of the "older men." They evidently regarded him as a cub, so he got no opportunity of talking abstractly to Elsie about love, and of hinting at his prospective resounding career.

This would not have been so bad, but he detected an exchange of glances between Elsie and one of the men when occasion gave him an opportunity to remark that it was his opinion that Booth was a greatly overestimated actor; that indeed, there were men alive—especially younger men—who would surpass him.

Archie forgave the glances, however, because he remembered that Elsie was not yet aware of the fame he intended to bring to the name of Trigg. Upon repetitions of his visit, which occurred as often as Elsie had no other engagement, he fully informed her of his future goal. He was quite sure she was impressed by this, too, though she would sometimes burst into an unexpected laugh—as, of course, women will.

Love grew in him apace, and he was fancying soon that their exchange of love generalizations, in which she seemed shyly to avoid any open confession of her ardor, was almost as good as scenes from Shakespeare. Indeed he almost persuaded himself for a while that perhaps he ought to forego the stage, as much as it needed great artists, in order to write poetic drama. Meanwhile he lost appetite and healthy color, and as April had arrived, became addicted to languors as interesting as his pallor.

Now comedy has a trick of turning tragedy on our hands, and it so happened with Archie. One afternoon he returned late from the wooded park on the outskirts of the city—a Park in which he was accustomed to practice his "rôles"—to hear his mother tell a caller that the afternoon paper reported the engagement of Elsie Courtnay to Hall Conway. And he heard the caller's reply that she was not surprised; that everybody had expected it and thought it a most suitable match.

Archie went to bed, without his supper. When Mrs. Trigg came to learn the reason and

found him feverish, he refused to have the doctor. Doctors, forsooth! What could doctors do for a tragically broken heart? And was n't his broken? Could anything but a broken heart give that utter sense of sickness permeating every drop of his blood, that sense of the immanence of death, and was not death the only cure?

When, however, the fever was followed by a chill the next morning, Mrs. Trigg would not listen any longer to "It 's no use," from Archie, but sent for Dr. Morris. Archie submitted, sure that no medical skill could diagnose his ailment—which he expected to bear with romantic silence even beyond the tomb. Indifferently, therefore, he submitted tongue and pulse to scrutiny and was not even interested when his mother and Dr. Morris conferred in the hall. Did n't he know the nature of his malady far better than watch and thermometer and *Materia Medica* could tell it?

The chill was followed by fever, the fever by chill. Both were accompanied by such generous doses of quinine, that several days later

Archie concluded he was near death, and that therefore he had better reveal the whole situation to his mother.

With pity for her, and for himself—for his young genius that might be snuffed out so soon, he said the third morning: "Mother, do you know what 's the matter with me?"

"Yes, my boy," said Mrs. Trigg competently and without alarm, "you have malaria."

Archie looked at her a moment, then as the remains of romance melted in him, weakly burst into tears, "I—I—thought," he said, "I thought it was love." And when Mrs. Trigg gathered him up laughingly in her arms, he had his cry out.

II

Archie soon rose from his illness. There was, perhaps, a little of the "O that this too, too solid flesh would melt" air about him still, and he purchased him a black necktie as a "suit of woe" to accord with his mood. He told himself that love had been tried in the balance and found wanting. Women should be used in his art, but not in his life. He was

doomed to be a Benedick, but he meant to be it without bitterness—and without Benedick's ultimate weak yielding. Never again would he be deceived by the tawdry illusion of love.

Yet would not such abstraction from feminine society be detrimental to his future greatness? He faced this question and decided that since his motto must be "all for art," he would again sacrifice his inclinations—in part, at least. He would go to see the sex—but only look upon its members as possible friends.

With much care therefore he began to canvass his girl acquaintances, in search of a flower of femininity which would not distil the poison of love. The blossom he hit upon was by no means the fairest in the field, but nevertheless had a lure of her own.

During his second call upon quiet unassuming little Marjorie Burton, Archie felt sure that he had found his Platonic mate. Here was a girl with hazel eyes, and a charming figure, who did not spend her time trying merely to display them. When you were with her and talked about the great things you meant to do, she

did n't seem bored, or look as if she were expecting some other fellow to come in. She listened to you with shining interest and encouraged you to express, with a modesty which did not minimize your merit, what less understanding souls would probably call your egotism.

This was friendship! And how much safer and finer it was than love! Archie looked up his Shakespeare index again to learn immortal words about friendship; and having found the lines—

> I count myself in nothing else so happy
> As in a soul remembering my good friends;

he quoted them to Marjorie, who agreed that friendship indeed was wonderful—and arranged her hair the more becomingly for Archie's next visit.

So quiet and discreet were Marjorie's attractions that they were as invisible to Archie as those of a magnet. Her nature, he discovered, was not, perhaps, as exalted as his own—but in a friend that was not a prerequisite. He could never quite reveal to her *all* the wonders of his

being, for invariably when he was on the point of doing so she would ask some such impersonal yet disconcerting question as, whether he did not believe that really great men were at bottom humble? Or, whether a silent purpose is not really more effective than a spoken one in promoting achievement?

Archie's replies were disinterestedly philosophical. He did not realize that during each of these discussions the wise little magnet had drawn him closer to herself and transmitted to him some of her own nature. As he was completing his course at the High School, he only permitted himself to be magnetized three evenings a week. He told his mother, however, that it was really a shame a fellow with so improving a friend did not have more time for calls. One only wasted time on love; no more of that for him. But friendship, with talks of books and "the profession," with serious discussions of human nature that were really inspiring—well—such things gave life a meaning. Archie did not see that his mother's "no doubt, dear," held a flicker of amusement.

How long this Platonic paradise might have lasted can not be surmised, for Archie's ascetic ambition, reinforced by melancholy experience, was vast. But to Mr. and Mrs. Burton, Marjorie's parents, who decided to move to California, it was an inconsiderable quantity. Through Marjorie, who could give no unembarrassing reason why the move should not be made, the news was communicated to Archie.

The disturbance this announcement created in Archie's breast was peculiar and intense. He knew that he was capable of friendship as few men are. Indeed he had proved that to himself more than once. Yet he was unprepared for the unfathomable depth and greatness of his friendship for Marjorie. Losing her would be like losing the stars out of his universe, he soliloquized—though with the consoling sense that it is the pathetic destiny of genius to be lonely.

Three days, however, of the aching sense of this coming loss again brought the pallor to Archie's face. The fact that the Burtons were to move within the month made of Archie a

Spartan youth at whose vitals each hour was a gnawing fox of uneasiness. At one moment he would dramatize the scene of Marjorie's departure; of how he would go into her parlor and, having placed a bunch of violets in her hand, raise it to his lips, and tell her that until old age and death claimed them, friendship would bind their hearts. At another moment he would remember with a sinking of every sense in him that California is said to be a "pagan" sort of place, and that Marjorie would be exposed to its perils without his guidance and protection.

The consequence of this disturbance was that Archie's pallor brought loss of appetite, loss of appetite brought weakness and derangement of various physiological processes, and these, together with his state of mind in turn brought fever.

Archie, remembering a previous experience, decided that his former enemy, malaria, was attacking him at the moment when he most wanted his health. He resisted valiantly; eating when he did not want food, concealing his

fever from the keen eyes of Mrs. Trigg, and working gallantly at his lessons.

In a week's time, however, surrender was necessary, and he went to bed. Again Doctor Morris came, made his physical examinations and not being satisfied with this proceeded to use a little psycho-analysis. Was Archie troubled? he asked. Had he had any serious shock or loss? When told by Mrs. Trigg that she knew of none; that Archie had mentioned nothing of a disturbing nature—except the departure soon of a girl friend to whom he was devoted, the physician merely grunted and said he would call again.

The silence and reserve which a man of genius must keep among his own relations—who can't understand—were broken by Archie after four days in bed. He insisted on writing to Marjorie each day. The hand of Fate, he told her, was keeping him from being with his dear comrade during the last days before her departure. He wanted also to quote the immortal friendship lines again, but could not, as, for some unknown reason, they now seemed inadequate.

Most of this sad time was spent in talking to his mother about Marjorie, for Mrs. Trigg began skilfully, quietly and with an increasingly humorous satisfaction to draw him out. She learned of Marjorie's hair and eyes; of how she was "not like other girls, you know; not exactly pretty, but somehow better than pretty"; of how she encouraged you without flattering you; and of how she had little ways that doubtless others would not see at all and call charming, but that to a friend's eyes like his were—well—they were really more attractive than Miss Marlowe's.

Mrs. Trigg would say, "I see," with solemn understanding, and one day went to call on Marjorie, with the ostensible purpose of assuring Archie on her return that all was well with his friend, but really for reasons of her own.

When she came back she found Archie in a very low state of mind indeed. He was quoting: "We are such stuff as dreams are made of," and told her as she took off her hat and gave him his medicine, that he had thought it wise to make his will, and that he hoped she

would see to it that Marjorie got his sapphire ring—which was his most treasured possession.

When Mrs. Trigg sat down suddenly in a rocker and laughed, Archie thought she was hysterical with excessive, overwhelming grief at the thought of his approaching death. When she avowed to him that she did not have hysteria, he was deeply wounded at the callousness which could laugh with his demise so near. He drew the covers around him like royal robes, and turned his face to the wall.

"But, my dear boy," Mrs. Trigg said, "you are not going to die."

"Oh, I know you 're trying to conceal it from me—you and Doctor Morris. I 've seen you consulting together. But it does n't deceive me. This malaria has a death grip on me. I feel it 's hopeless. And I see too well the hollowness of this world. I wish no longer to be its galley slave."

"Malaria!" cried Mrs. Trigg, a light of greater comprehension coming into her eyes. "My dear Archie, you have no malaria!"

This was staggering. Archie had felt what

seemed to be the same disturbance once before; and as he had read how malaria sometimes wastes people to skin and bones before dealing the final blow, he had visualized how he, who was to have become a matinée idol, would be given over to premature tragedy.

"Then . . . what have I got?" he said, weakly, in troubled confusion.

"My dear, you are in love," said Mrs. Trigg.

Archie's mouth fell open. He looked at his mother, and saw again the uncontrollable laughter in her eyes. Was it true? Was he again the victim of that deceptive force, which he had avowed should never again deflect the arrow-straight course of his genius?

Mrs. Trigg, seeing the awful depth of his woe, controlled herself and said gently:

"Yes, dear, there 's nothing the matter with you except that you are in love. And I will tell you more—Marjorie 's in love with you. No—she did n't tell me so, exactly; but she is, so you 'd better get well as soon as possible."

Archie sat up the next morning; and on the second night he was with Marjorie.

As he declared his undying devotion with a dramatic effect he believed no Romeo had ever equalled, he told her he would surely have died had he not discovered his love just in time. Later he asked, inconsequentially, "Marjorie, have you ever had malaria?"

REPRISAL

By Alice Hegan Rice

REPRISAL

MME. CARBONNEZ stood in the sunny market-place reading the latest proclamation of the commandant. Her blond head and broad shoulders rose above the crowd just as her clear, loud voice rose above the indignant clamor about her.

"Be still there, you!" she demanded imperiously of a small, shrill person in black who was pushing her way to the front.

"But read. Read the proclamation! What does it say?" implored those on the outskirts of the crowd.

"It says," continued Mme. Carbonnez scornfully, "that it is not enough that we must have passports to go from town to town; we must not even go on our own streets after eight at night:

"From to-night all streets and bridges and locks will be occupied by a German guard, who will take ten hostages in each street whom they

will keep under observation. Should any disturbance occur hostages will be shot."

A murmur of horrified protest passed from lip to lip.

It was after the fall of Antwerp, during those fatal days when Belgium was cut off from the rest of the world by a wall of fire and steel. Yet Belgium was not vanquished. She was at the stake, but she was smiling with the ecstasy of a Christian martyr. Patriotism was her religion, and Adrienne Carbonnez was one of its most ardent priestesses.

She it was who had kept up the courage of the village during those terrible months of German occupation. She it was who had most daringly defied the military authorities.

She had secretly given aid to the wives and children of men who refused to work for the enemy, although in so doing she risked a year's imprisonment. She had found innumerable ways of circulating "La Libre Belgique," and had the audacity to smuggle a copy of the forbidden sheet into the household of the august commandant himself. Her knowledge of the

German language, gained during two years of schooling in Cologne, where her father had once been a prosperous basket-maker, enabled her to understand what was going on about her, and she had become expert in carrying on a glib conversation in her native French while taking in every word of German spoken around her. In fact, Mme. Carbonnez's one diversion in those almost unlivable days lay in the joy of harassing and outwitting the stupid German officials.

"A sentinel at the bridge means a sentinel at your door, Adrienne," cried a woman behind her, teasingly.

"So much the better. I will serve him coffee," said Adrienne, demurely smoothing the folds of her yellow dress.

The crowd broke into a laugh. It recalled the time Adrienne had served coffee, by request, to an arrogant Prussian officer who stopped at her farm, and had slipped enough ipecac into his cup to put him out of commission for the rest of the day.

But the merriment of the crowd was short-

lived. A German guard, seeing a number of people gathered together, ordered them roughly to disperse, and smiles gave way to scowls, and good humor to sullen resentment.

Mme. Carbonnez spoke to her dogs, which were hitched to her small milk-wagon, and obediently moved on, but as she went she adroitly slipped her arm through that of the black-gowned woman beside her and caught by the hand the little girl in red who was standing near. Thus, linked together, the yellow, red and black of Belgium went out of the market-place to the suppressed delight of those left behind.

It was long since the tricolored cockades, so dear to the hearts of the peasants, had been allowed, and even the ivy leaf, symbolizing faithfulness, was sternly forbidden by the police. But on almost every Belgian was cunningly displayed a tiny ribbon of green, signifying that hope at least was not dead.

Past the Guild House and skirting the old Cloth Hall the little group went on its way, the dogs licking hungrily at bits of refuse in the

streets. And as it passed, greetings and nods followed it, and an understanding smile passed from lip to lip.

At Cathedral Square Mme. Carbonnez came to a halt and took her stand in the long line of ragged children and women who were waiting for their daily ration of soup and bread.

Three sides of the square were lined with soldiers, and from the steps of a schoolhouse which had been taken over by the military authorities, two German officers in immaculate uniforms were descending with clanking swords. After a few words of colloquy with the Belgian Relief agent they each took a loaf of bread from his basket and went back up the steps, to return with even greater dignity and ostentation than before.

"But what does it mean?" whispered the woman in black, fearful of some new indignity to be suffered.

Mme. Carbonnez lifted her fine eyebrows and smiled.

"Hist!" she said, jerking her thumb over her shoulder. "You hear that clicking? They are

making moving pictures, which will go into every town, showing kind-hearted Prussian officers feeding the Belgian rabble! Bah! I spit upon the bread their bloody hands have touched!''

And though she knew quite well there was no bread at home for the children's supper, she called sharply to her dogs and strode disdainfully out of the square. Hate had long since become an obsession with her. The sight of the German soldiers lolling insolently about the porches of the gabled houses that once were the homes of her friends roused her to fury. The memory of to-day's proclamation and the results she all too clearly foresaw sent the blood boiling through her veins.

On and on she trudged, through the town and out on the old bridge road, blind to the beauty of the day, to the sharp silhouettes of the pollard willows against the cold blue of the wintry sky. She could see nothing but burned farmhouses and starved cattle wandering aimlessly in search of food.

But as she came in sight of her own little

house at the foot of the bridge her eyes softened and she began to hum the "*Brabanconne,*" secure in the knowledge that here at least she was out of earshot of the hated Boche.

As she turned in at the gate three tow-headed little girls, dragging a smaller boy, rushed to meet her. With four pairs of arms about her, and a clamor of noisy greeting that was augmented by the frantic barking of the dogs, she made her triumphal entry into the house.

"Bread!" she repeated gaily in answer to the first question. "But no; we shall have something else to-day. A little fish with big round eyes. See, Jean, he winks at you!"

All eyes peered into the basket on her arm.

"But it is so little," protested the oldest girl, Marie.

"So is our Jean," cried his mother, snatching him up and kissing his soft neck; "but we love him none the less for that. Come, we will fry the fish in a big pan and perhaps he will grow."

After the scanty meal had been disposed of and the children put to bed, Adrienne hastened

to put things to rights for the night while there was yet the light of day. For now that a German sentinel was to guard the bridge at night there would be no privacy for her. The order had gone forth, weeks before, that all windows overlooking the street or road must be lit up and the shutters and blinds remain undrawn. It was only since the cold weather had come that she had been allowed to close her front door, and even now she might not lock it.

But she was not afraid. Fear had died in her on the day they had deported her husband to Germany. Big, impulsive Jean, with the strong arms and tender eyes, who had been guilty of the heinous offense of shouting, "*Vive la France!*" as a small convoy of French soldiers was passing through the town. Three years of imprisonment for him, and black despair for Adrienne. But not fear! In their last embrace he had said: "Be brave, my girl! Our king and our country need our courage!" And from that moment she had held her head high and refused to lower her colors in the face of an all but victorious foe.

But in the weary hours of night she gave up the struggle against appearance, and often stifled her sobs in the pillows lest the children should hear. On the brink of starvation, persecuted by spies, subjected to daily indignities, and unable to hear any word from her Jean, she was sore beset. She was even denied the comfort of her crucifix during those dark night hours. The pillaging Germans had taken it along with her cherished brass kettles and copper pots, to make cartridge-cases and shell-fuses with which to fire on her own people.

To-night as she sat by her window, with her hands gripped beneath her shawl, remembering the indignities of the past two years, she became dully conscious of a figure passing and repassing her gate. She pressed her face against the pane, and watched him moving with machine-like regularity from the bridge to the corner of her garden.

As if glad of some tangible object on which to focus all the pent-up hatred of her soul, she glared at the moving sentry. He stood as a symbol of the oppression and persecution of the

invading army. She longed to pick a quarrel with him, to humiliate him, to inconvenience him in some way. Here was a chance to pay back; if only she was clever enough to think of a way that would not endanger her! She must trick him into committing some blunder, into violating some general order. It was forbidden the sentries to talk to any one except in line of duty; perhaps she could make him talk to her and trust to some passer-by reporting the indiscretion.

With Adrienne, to think was to act. Tightening her shawl about her shoulders, she went out through the hall into the garden. It was a cold night, with heavy clouds rolling up from the west. The wind cut her face as she crept forward and crouched behind the fence, waiting and watching. The sentry was coming toward her from the bridge, and she noticed the peculiar heaviness and uncertainty of his gait. Twice he stopped and steadied himself by the fence; then he pulled himself together and came on.

"He 's drunk!" whispered Adrienne to herself exultingly. "He will fall of his own accord. I have only to wait and watch the fun."

But he was not drunk, as she saw when he came abreast of her. His dull, heavy face was sullen, but not sodden, and the uncertainty of his movements was more that of fatigue than intoxication. She slipped along the fence and reached the gate as he did.

"It 's a cold night," she said in German, crossing her arms on the top bar of the gate.

The soldier started at hearing his native tongue and came to port arms.

"Halt! Who is there?" he demanded.

"I am Adrienne Carbonnez," was the modest answer. "This is my Belgian home. My German home was in Cologne."

"Koln?" the man repeated with sudden interest.

"Yes. My father's shop was in the Stein Strasse. You know Cologne?"

"Yah," he said and moved steadily up and down.

It was evident that she could not count on the sentry's being taken unawares. She must think of another way.

"I have no food to offer you," she said as he returned; "but you are thirsty perhaps?"

"Yes. Can you bring me milk?"

Adrienne shrugged. "Bah! Milk will not warm you. I will bring you rum."

The soldier steadied himself by the fence.

"*Es ist verboten,*" he said uneasily, as if to himself; then he added impatiently:

"I have eaten nothing since noon. Bring me milk."

Adrienne sped up the garden walk and, snatching a lighted candle from the hall, made her way to the small storeroom back of the kitchen. On a swinging shelf in the corner was a tall bottle, sole relic of the old days when Christmas demanded a flowing bowl and Jean was wont to drink the health of his neighbors.

She drew the cork, lightly replaced it, and tucking the bottle under her arm, hurried back to the gate.

This time she did not wait for the sentinel,

but placing the bottle on the gate-post, she slipped back to the house and once more took up her watch at the window.

Already her spirits had risen at the thought of the story she would have to tell in the market-place on the morrow.

Perhaps he had not spied the tempting bottle! But he would; never fear! A man was a man, and this man was a Boche. What pertained to his appetite would not be overlooked.

Would he get tipsy and noisy? Or would he go to sleep at his post? She hoped it would be the latter, for then the relief would find him drunk at his post! Court martial, no less. One more debt of vengeance paid on the long account she owed to Germany.

Presently a heavy cloud swept over the moon, the wind rose, and sleet began to rattle against the window-pane. She could no longer see the figure at the gate. With a smile of satisfaction she rose and prepared for bed.

The sentinel would continue to rest until he woke up and found himself in the guard-house.

What was the penalty for a sentinel being

drunk at his post? It depended, she supposed, on the officers.

But they were all great brutes. Any serious breach of discipline was punishable by death.

She stirred restlessly. The sentinel was young, not over twenty-two. She supposed he would be shot. It could n't have been many years since he was a kiddy like Jean, a little tow-headed, red-cheeked lad, such as she had romped with in Cologne.

She wondered if his mother was living. What a disgrace for her! And she would never know that he had refused the rum, that he was cold and exhausted and that temptation had been put in his way.

Adrienne pulled her thoughts up short. Silly sentiment! He was a hulking, insolent Boche, who would loot her house and destroy her property at the wink of an eye.

He was part of that damnable machine that was crushing the life out of her beloved country; that was separating her from her husband and starving her children, and making all life a hideous, continuous nightmare.

She tried to sleep, but in spite of herself she listened for sounds on the road. But the only noise that broke the stillness was the driving sleet against the pane.

Nine o'clock, nine-thirty, ten! She wondered if he was still able to walk his post.

Presently she rose, and slipping on shoes and a warm wrapper she went to the window. Her own image confronted her against the black glass.

For a time she sat there motionless, thinking; then she snatched a blanket from the bed, and throwing it around her, ran down the steps and into the garden.

As the chill air struck her bare ankles she shivered, but pressed on, skirting the bushes cautiously until she reached the gate. There she put out her hand and felt along cautiously until she reached the gate-post.

There was nothing on it! She listened for the sound of departing or approaching footsteps, but all was silent.

Groping her way through the darkness she made her way down the road. At the foot of

the bridge she stumbled against something. It was her enemy the Boche, lying face downward in sleep, with the empty bottle beside him.

It was just as she had planned and hoped. The stage was perfectly set for the climax, and all she had to do was to go back to her warm bed and let events take their natural course.

But instead of doing so she shoved the sleeping man almost angrily with her foot.

"Get up you drunken loafer!" she cried in German. "Do you want to be shot?"

"I say!" she exclaimed, this time shaking him violently. "Wake up! Do you know where you are?"

But the man might have been dead for all the response he made.

Adrienne caught her breath sharply. Some curious change was working in her; that woman's instinct to succor a helpless fellow being even though he be a foe.

Stooping down, she got her hands under his arms and began dragging him into the bushes. At least she would hide him until she could think what to do. For she knew now that if she

could prevent it she was not going to let him be shot.

Then she sat beside him, panting with the effort, and looked at him.

He was evidently an ignorant country boy, one of those clumsy louts she used to see driving into Cologne on the market-wagons. Everything about him was inert except the right hand which still grasped his gun. It was a coarse, grimy hand, instinctively obeying the will that could no longer voluntarily control it.

Adrienne looked at him with contemptuous pity. Poor fool!

Suddenly she lifted her head. Through the stillness came the faint beat of horses' feet.

"Wake up!" she cried frantically, tugging at the sleeping soldier. "Some one is coming! Get up, I say!"

But he gave no response.

Adrienne held her breath again and listened. There was no longer any doubt. Two or more horses were approaching the bridge from the far side, and in a minute would be upon them.

Stooping down she dragged the sentinel's

gray greatcoat off his shoulders and thrust her own arms into the sleeves. She snatched up his cap and put it on, then wrenched the gun from his contracted hand and scrambled up the bank.

Adrienne's sharp wits served her in good stead. She had seen the sentinel challenge the pedestrian earlier in the night, and she knew what to do. Advancing rapidly, she called out in the deepest voice she could command:

"Halt! Who goes there?"

The figure in advance came to a halt and an indifferent voice answered:

"Officer of the day, with the countersign."

Adrienne's heart missed a beat. Could she remember the next move? Would he discover that she was a woman when he came closer? She moved into the deeper shadows at the foot of the bridge before she said uncertainly:

"Advance, officer of the day, with the countersign."

The officer, who had dismounted, was leading his horse, which was fortunately between him

and Adrienne. He gave the countersign and added:

"Has any one passed this post?"

"Yes, sir; a non-commissioned officer with the countersign."

"Anything to report?"

"Nothing, sir."

The officer got back into his saddle and rode on, but the man with him lingered a moment with more than one suspicious look over his shoulder before he, too, rode on.

Adrienne, limp from excitement, leaned against the bridge post. She had saved the sentinel this once, but what was to be done during the hour that must elapse before midnight, and how could she rouse him before the relief came?

Why should she rouse him at all? The German dog! To think of her, Adrienne Carbonnez, in a German uniform, protecting a drunken Boche, who would probably walk ten miles to do one of her countrymen an injury!

A shudder of repulsion swept her. Her body

shrank from contact with that grimy, gray-green uniform.

She went back to the gully, where the sentinel lay as she had left him, his mouth open, his stiff coarse hair standing straight up from his fair, boyish forehead. No; she could not leave him to be found like that. She must rouse him at any cost.

Snatching his cap from her head she scrambled down the bank and filled it with icy water which she dashed in his face. There was no response; she pricked his palms with a pin, and beat upon his shoulders with her fists.

At the slightest noise from the road above she instantly picked up the gun and walked the post, ready to challenge any passer-by.

But no one passed. She and the drunken sentinel had the night to themselves.

The clock in the far-off belfry chimed eleven-thirty. Only thirty minutes more before the relief was due! Seizing him by the hair, she boxed his ears until her hands smarted.

"You dog of a German!" she muttered. "Wake up, I say!"

The soldier stirred slightly and opened his dazed eyes.

"Quick!" urged Adrienne. "The relief is almost due. Sit up! Put on your coat. Here, I 'll help you. No, not that arm, you fool."

The big clumsy fellow obeyed stupidly.

"Now you must walk," she commanded. "Walk or I will beat you with the gun. Do you hear. Walk, I say!"

Clinging to her arm, he staggered forward, from the bridge to the gate, from the gate back to the bridge, stumbling, drowsing, waking with a start. And Adrienne supported him, scolding, threatening, encouraging, and always listening in an agony of apprehension.

Gradually his steps grew firmer. The driving sleet in his face, the enforced motion, were beginning to sober him.

"I can go alone now, madam," he said thickly, gazing about in bewilderment. "I must have slept. But you—you have befriended me. You have saved me for the Fatherland!"

Adrienne, disheveled, overwrought, half-

frozen, looked at him for one savage moment, then to his utter amazement she flung out her arm and struck him full in the face.

"Curse your Fatherland!" she screamed in fury. "Curse your Kaiser and all his damnable crew. What I did for you was not for your Fatherland; it was for your mother's son. May she never bear another!"

And leaving him standing bewildered in the road, she rushed like a whirlwind into her garden and disappeared in the darkness.

UNDER NEW MOONS

By Cale Young Rice

UNDER NEW MOONS

I

SHE did not care, Carmen Joyce. She had wanted to come back to her old home for a spree of remembrance, therefore she had come. She merely put aside her present lover —the fifth during the ten years of her openly questioned life—and taking the train found herself, twelve hours later, in the city where she had spent an innocent girlhood.

From her window in the hotel she gazed on what she had most desired to see—Springview Park and the river. There had been changes, naturally. The park was enlarged, filled in and planted with trees. The river, once the wide frontier of her world, seemed strangely shrunken. But she gave herself over to the intoxication of the scene until she knew she would cry if she stood there another minute.

She turned away, determining to go for a walk through the familiar streets. As she

paused at the mirror to adjust her hat to a piquant conspicuous angle and touch up her lips, names of old friends rose from the sodden places of her mind. Elsie Barton—who had a beauty that nearly rivalled her own. Delia Carr, who, two years older, had awakened her all too instinctive knowledge of the subtleties of sex. George Stone, a boor, yet the first boy to kiss her: why had she let him? Fred May, Wills Walker, and last, but with an unfailing stab of pain and regret, Harvey Ward.

What had become of them? She was always asking herself the question. In the theatres, restaurants and cabarets of New York or Chicago—where everybody came in time—or in the dubious privacy of her various apartments, she would muse upon it. But if a temptation came to inquire, as now, she merely shrugged her shoulders, lighted a cigarette and blew it away in smoke. To discover that they were happy, safe, respectable; that they had homes and children while she had only uncertain luxuries and excesses; would make her want to smash things. And smashing things is the one luxury women

in her position can not permit themselves. They are too near the brink of desperation to indulge in a violence so precarious.

She went out the door soothed by a glimpse of her figure's rounded loveliness in the mirror. She adored her figure, always. She could have gone back now to watch it for hours in the glass, taking one slow languorous pose after another. As she passed up First Street to Main she knew its softly revealed beauty would exact tribute from masculine eyes the most indifferent. This knowledge was a further momentary anodyne to the aching discontent of her mind.

Main Street was changed too. She found larger stores and new names jostling the exclusive old ones. It pleased her and she felt a perverse desire to play havoc with her charms among some of the exclusives whom she remembered. The desire, however, reminded her of her shame, and brought back into the half-swept house of her mind the seven devils of discontent.

She passed from window to window of the shops, looking up from time to time to discover

if any of the hurrying faces were familiar. Near Fourth Street a woman handsomely gowned came from a jeweller's store ahead, with a man of quiet yet distinguished bearing. Carmen did not see their faces, which she felt were happy, but had a pang of envy for the taste which had chosen the gown. Then something familiar in the man's figure struck her; what was it? Before she could determine, both stepped into a limousine and were chauffeured away, leaving her with more than the footfarer's usual sense of inferiority.

She went on to the jeweller's window and stopped. The glittering of platinum and diamonds on purple velvet fascinated her, as always. She had such gems herself; a part of the price of her complacence, so not always conducive to her happiness. But as she could never get enough, she would have forgotten her memory-spree in the lustrous display had not her eyes chanced to wander to a placard in a corner of the window.

At first she only took in a few words: "Celebrated Novelist—This evening—8:15"; words

that were not of the slightest interest to her, for she had long ago given up book-reading. She turned again, therefore, to an examination of a blue diamond pendant before her.

Something in the fringe of consciousness, however, caught at her attention and drew her eyes back to the placard. Then she read, though still with too much restless distraction to comprehend:

AUTHOR'S READING!
By
Mr. Harvey Ward
The Celebrated Novelist
8.15 this evening
The Quentin Theatre
Tickets $1.00

She read it again, but not until she had done so a third time did she really begin to grasp its meaning. Then light came, and a burning turmoil of emotions surged up to her mind and began to kindle one realization after another.

Harvey . . . Harvey . . . was in town! . . . It was he who had just come out of the jeweller's! . . . He was a writer! . . . He was go-

ing to read to-night, in his home city, from his books! . . . To read at The Quentin! . . . There would be hundreds to hear him. . . . He would be honored, admired, applauded. . . . He whom she had first loved . . . whom she still loved . . . to whom she had first given herself!

Mingled as they were with the yearning pangs of unhappiness that had drawn her back to her one time home, these realizations dazed her. She moved from the window, wishing to get away from the streets back to the hotel, where she could think. Her knees trembled, she paused to control them, and finding that she had taken the wrong direction, faced about and almost lurched into the arms of a policeman who looked after her with experienced dubiety.

She began to say to herself as she hurried blindly on, "So now I know at last. . . . He went away and made good. . . . He 's a highbrow and famous. . . . He 's above me. . . . He would n't even want to speak to me, perhaps, if he 's heard what my life is. And he has . . .

trust men for that. They always hear when you have gone wrong more than once; they scent it as a crow does carrion. He knows! And he has come back with his fame, safe, free and happy, while I . . .!"

Bitterness, despair and hatred began to writhe and alternately strangle one another in her—hatred of herself, of him, of all their former friends, who were now only his. How could such things be—did God enjoy them? Men had argued with her that perhaps no God made the world, or that He perhaps was unable to do better with the job. That was bosh. He had made the world, all right. But in doing so He had merely prostituted Himself to some low ends of His own—as she had prostituted her beauty. He had! She was n't to be deceived, and that was why she had refused to read books all these years. Books only told lies about Him and made you unhappy. There was as much truth in them as in a poker player's bluff. She knew it and had called God's bluff early in the game. She had told Him that He was bankrupt or a cheat, and she would n't play with

Him—not for a stake in this life or in the Hereafter!

Tears rushed into her eyes. Hurrying faster she brushed them away.

A newsboy offered her a paper. She pushed heedlessly by, but happened to think that it might contain something about the reading, so turned and bought one, leaving a quarter in his hand.

"I 'd 'uv give it to *you,* lady," she heard him say admiringly as she passed on. The eternal masculine! . . . Well, it had done for her, she thought sobbingly, if she had n't done for herself! . . . For herself! . . .

In her room, trembling, she opened the paper. Striking headlines immediately met her eyes—headlines that held another bitterness. "Engagement of Mr. Harvey Ward to Miss Elsie Barton announced," they told her.

She tried to read on, but could not. The vision of Elsie with him—for no doubt it had been she at the jeweller's—fogged her eyes. When they cleared, the rest of the article informed her that Mr. Ward, who had returned to his home

city to give a reading of his inimitable stories, was to marry the city's great social favorite, Miss Elsie Barton, in early June; that the genius of the groom and rare beauty of the bride-to-be made the event one of unparalleled interest in the city social history, and that . . .

The paper fell from her hands, and unable to control her misery she flung herself across the bed, racked by such choking sobs as she had never before given vent to. Profanity, the mark of desperation in women she knew, hovered for the first time at her lips.

When her emotions began to subside, thoughts and memories had their way with her. She went over every time she had met Harvey. She recalled how he first began to want her. She remembered all the details of the night there in Springview Park,—the new moon, the River flowing by so silverly, the clasp of his arms about her as she yielded to him. She felt again the fragrant touch of the tall grass under her head, and saw the stars straight above her.

He had loved her then, a little. He had, he had! And if they had n't sent him away to col-

lege, if her father's downfall in the bank, and suicide had not followed, he would not have let her go—perhaps.

Well, she hated him now. He was to be honored, was he? Then she would be there. She would dress herself conspicuously, scornfully; she would take a box and outstare them all.

Rising she bathed her eyes—woefully red with weeping—and taking a silver flask from her dressing case lifted it to her lips. The unaccustomed liquor further disturbed her. Then through the telephone she ordered her box.

The sun had set across the Park and beyond the River. The wind whispered and touched her cheeks softly as a lover. The new moon's sickle, hanging low, pierced her now as on that other night. She turned away quivering and again drank from the flask.

She undressed, bathed, slipped into silken undergarments and stockings and stood looking at herself in the mirror. Her body's warm beauty, together with the alcohol, excited her, but helped to put out of her mind everything but her scornful determination. She laughed

once or twice when she thought of the scandalized twitter that would go round the theatre when it beheld her.

In crimson chiffon, with hat of like hue, and with emeralds at her throat and fingers, she set forth. She meant to get there in time for the gathering of the audience, and for Harvey Ward's entrance.

She was suffering, but she would be as insolently scornful as the most pretentious prude of them all! They would sit stiffly virtuous? Well, did n't she understand them, had n't she grown up with them? Did n't she know things? Were they so much better than she? These thoughts and the theatre's gilded foyer, with its startling posters of actors and actresses in various rôles, keyed her up the more for playing her part.

The audience was coming in and she was being observed. The women whispered under fans, for the April night was warm. Several of their men recognized her promptly and wanted to bow—she knew that—but only stared dutifully beyond her to the stage. Her lips

curled mockingly and she wanted to laugh, outrageously. But once or twice, too, there was a hungry pang at her heart when a face she had been fond of turned toward her, then looked away.

But now there was applause, for Harvey Ward had come on the stage. He was introduced. Again there was applause, more prolonged and then after a few preliminary words he began to read.

She sat back in her box, like a half-hidden crimson rose between the leaf-patterned draperies, and gazed at him. Though he was erect and perfectly dressed, he looked older and sadder than she had expected. His voice, however, was even more enthralling. But as she was unaccustomed to listen to words read from a book, she was not following the story.

Her mind was confused, too, her flesh tingling, and her excitement grew keener as the new wine of the present mingled in her with the old of the past. A desire to have his kisses again on her lips and throat quivered and ran like a tender flame along her nerves. She

thought of Elsie Barton, and looked toward her, but without really seeing her.

Then something he was reading caught her attention, as in a net. She began to listen, leaning forward in her box, with mouth slightly open and straining eyes. As she did so, she saw that he recognized her, and felt a brief gloating as he faltered over a word and seemed inwardly at a loss. But he went on, and then suddenly she knew what he was reading. He was telling *their* story,—hers and his. The names were changed, and the place—but the heart of it was not. The words he read were the words he had spoken to her; the girl in the story was saying things *she* had said—little intimate endearments that she had never used to another—because they were too sacred, even to a woman like herself.

The realization shook her until she had to grind her teeth to keep from choking.

Would he go on? *Would* he expose her young passionate love, the one beautiful thing she had kept enshrined from the soiling years, to this craning crowd? No, no! It would be

cruel! Shameful! Beyond anything she herself had done! Should she not stop him? Should she not get up and cry out upon him, once and for all?

The thought began to obsess her irresistibly. He read on. He was nearing their night of nights. Her anger, outraged and irresponsible, was becoming violent, uncontrollable. It drowned her reason in one hot wave after another. She knew dimly that he meant her no harm, that he had not known she was there. But she craved for some offset to her downfall that would enable her to make him—and others—pay as she had paid. And now his desecrating words offered it.

She tried to calm herself. Warning thoughts told her such an outbreak would be but vulgar proof of her shamelessness; and perhaps she would be thought drunk. But when she saw finally, that he meant to read all—distressed though he seemed; when she heard him saying, "That evening as the twilight faded, as the breeze called the Spring fragrance to a tryst, and the new moon hung over the River," con-

trol forsook her. She rose to her feet, desperate and violently quivering.

As she did so he paused and looked toward her—he, then the whole audience. She stood for a moment, with the anger and anguish of accusal on her face, and strove to speak, but the words were burning gags in her throat. Then realizing the stark publicity that would follow her outbreak, strength failed her; and with only a sobbing heart-broken exclamation, she stumbled from the box, out an exit that happened to be near, and into a narrow passage between damp brick walls that led to the street.

II

She was sobbing still as she reached the sidewalk, but fortunately there was no one at the theatre's glaring entrance as she hastened past. Where she was going, what direction she was taking, she did not know. The anguish of the day, the disgrace of the scene she had just enacted, together with the first fear she had ever felt that final and despair might be her lot, drove her on.

After an hour's wandering she found herself in an open space, saw a bench before her and sank down upon it. Closing her eyes she tried to shut out the vision of the crowded theatre that swam again and again from the darkness before her sight. She no longer wanted to remember, only to forget and rest. Yet something in the place where she sat would not let her rest, something as impalpable as a ghost. What was it?

She opened her eyes under the impulsion and looked around her. There were paths and trees —under one of which, a sycamore, she was sitting. Above were the stars, and before her there—was that the river flowing darkly?

She realized that it was; that she was in the Park; that she was under the very tree where she and Harvey had first . . .!

A sob again broke from her. She started up asking herself why she had ever come back; it could only mean insult. She told herself aloud that she must go away out of the city at once.

This determination quieted her before she reached the hotel, and a hard sullen indifference

gave her an icy strength. When therefore, she entered the lobby and a bell-boy, approaching, told her that a gentleman was waiting to see her, she shrugged without interest and passed on.

But the boy volunteered further information. "It is Mr. Ward, Miss. He is in the parlor."

She stopped, expecting her heart to betray her again, but it did not. It only said to her: "So, he has come! Well, it was the least he could do. But what does it matter?"

Nodding to the boy, she went slowly toward the parlor. Facing the plush-hung door sat Harvey Ward. He rose as she entered, with a low, distressed, "Carmen!"

A shrug—which the day's tragedy was to make pathetically habitual to her—then she replied casually and they sat down. She was inexorably aware that he was trying to frame some right word of apology.

"You must know," he began with pain, "how unintentional this was. It was mere chance. I didn't dream you were here. I thought you were . . ." he hesitated.

"In Chicago? At my old trade of indulging lovers?" she suggested brazenly. "It 's good of you to keep informed about me."

"I knew nothing," he said distressedly, "though perhaps I should. Of course I 've heard rumors. I 'm sorry."

"The man who starts a girl down-hill can't say less, can he?" was her coolly timed reply. It did not miss its mark.

"No, Carmen; and that 's a fair thrust. But, forgive me, *was* I the first? I may be a cad for wanting to know surely, but it has troubled me greatly; and men do ask themselves the question—nearly always. And since I 've been engaged to Elsie, as you 've heard perhaps, I 've thought that I just must go to you and find out . . . and do something, if you 'll let me. So after hurting you to-night it seemed as if there would always be a cloud on my happiness unless you . . ."

He broke off helplessly, his grave, imaginative face expressive of all such sorely human complications. But before Carmen, whose in-

difference was shaken, could reply, he continued:

"Of course I 've no right to ask, however it may haunt me. But I want you to know that I really thought I loved you, when, when we . . . and I 'm ready to give all I 've made to help you, if—"

"Stop!" cried Carmen, rising and going to the window. The thought of using *his* money brought back all her bitterness, and she wanted to hurt him irreparably, as she had been hurt. She wanted to tell him that he *was* the first; that she was down and expected to go to the dogs; and—though she knew in her heart it was untrue—that it was all due to him!

But try as she would, she could not turn and say the words. There was something in her, touched again by his voice perhaps, that was stronger than all want of revenge. In women like her the desire to see the man they love, or have loved, made happy by them is unconquerable; and that desire it is which leads them to give overmuch.

Only for a moment longer, therefore, did she stand looking out on the flickering street. She made her decision, and all that was tender in her rushed, though bitterly still, to help make it complete.

"Go, go away," she cried. "I can't stand it. You were not the first!" She spoke the lie violently. "You are a fool to think so. Don't you know I 'm that kind of woman—you who write books?" She laughed tauntingly, a little hysterically. "Don't you see that if it had n't been you it would have been another? I used to love you, but I don't now. I don't love anybody. It 's dead in me—dead as youth and all the other things that don't stay."

"Carmen!" he cried, abysmally moved.

"Oh, you need n't think I 'll end in the streets," she added with deceptive bravado. "I know how to take care of myself. Besides there 's a man I know that would marry me. He knows my past, but *he* has n't been perfect, and he 's fair to women. If I 'd stick to him, he 'd stick to me. So go! I 'm sick of it all."

Harvey Ward rose.

"I will go," he said, reverently refraining from saying more; and having found his hat and coat, he went out through the curtains.

Then slowly Carmen followed down the hall to the elevator. In her room, to which it noiselessly bore her, she sank down by the open window and sat long, looking farewell over the Park and river.

At dawn there would be a train to take her away. She did not ask to what. She was only glad that in her last moment with him she had not been unworthy.

THE HAND ON THE SILL

By Alice Hegan Rice

THE HAND ON THE SILL

THE tale was told me by a gentle missionary one torrid night on the Indian Ocean when we lay in our steamer chairs under the big southern stars and watched the dipper hanging upside down in the midnight blue.

"Yes," she was saying, "I 've had a good many exciting experiences in my life. The East thirty years ago was a very different place to what it is now. I 'll never forget the day I first landed in Kobe, nor the strange night that followed. I was only twenty-two, but I think I must have got my first gray hairs that night."

"Do tell me about it," I urged, settling myself comfortably for one of those delightful, desultory evenings that one never seems to have time for on shore.

"Well," said Miss Dayton, smiling down at her long thin hands grown old in service for others. "You see neither Mary Peters nor I had ever been out of Tennessee when we started

alone for Japan. She was one of those pretty blond, helpless creatures, never intended by nature to be a missionary. She only lasted six months—married the first man who offered to take her home. We had both been wretchedly seasick on the way over and homesick as well, and we were rather a forlorn pair as we climbed down the ship's ladder into the launch that was to land us in Kobe.

"To cap our discomfort, no one met us at the wharf, and I had to struggle alone with the strange customs and the new language, in making the transfer of ourselves and our baggage to the train that was to carry us to Kyoto.

"At Kyoto a fresh misfortune awaited us. The compound, which was to be our future home, was deserted save for the *okasan,* an old woman in charge who gave us a letter from Dr. Woods, the presiding elder.

"It seemed that all the teachers were taking their vacation in a camp in the mountains, and that we were to come on at once to the half-way house where the Doctor would meet us and conduct us the rest of the way.

"'But how do we get there?' Mary asked almost in tears.

"The *okasan* tried to reassure us. In broken English she said it was all arranged that we should go by jinrikisha to the foot-hills and by *kago* the rest of the way. *Kagos,* you know, are those little bamboo hammocks swung on poles which two men, one in front and one behind, bear on their shoulders.

"'Can't we stay here until morning?' asked Mary dolefully.

"'No, no,' said the *okasan* positively. 'Must do as Master says. Jinrikisha waiting, *kago* waiting. You come Rest House by sun down, Master come Rest House by sundown. Very nice, everybody very happy.'

"We were anything but happy, however, as we ate a hasty luncheon and made ready to start forth again. It was terribly hot and ominous clouds hung about the mountains which we must reach before nightfall.

"We each climbed into a jinrikisha and put our hand bags into another and with six coolies in attendance, three to push and three to pull,

started forth on the last lap of our journey.

"The first few miles were so beautiful that we almost forgot our troubles. I never see mists rising that I don't think of that afternoon. They formed all manner of fantastic shapes against the hills, swinging and swirling in the rising gale like long scarves of gray gauze. Presently it began to rain and we had to stop while the coolies put up the tops of the jinrikishas and buttoned small squares of oilcloth across our laps.

"While this was being done my attention was attracted by the man who had been my pusher. Of all the faces I had ever looked into his seemed the most sinister. His head was shaved, revealing hideous pock marks that extended down his face and on to his neck. You have seen people who can't shut their mouths easily on account of their upper lips being too short? Well, he was like that, with a horrible mirthless grin that made me shiver. As he stood by the side of my jinrikisha, adjusting a strap, I noticed that his right hand was minus the forefinger and that the knuckle was en-

larged to twice its natural size. He must have seen me looking at it for he held it up with a leer and, making a motion to indicate that it had been bitten off, jabbered something in Japanese that made the other coolies laugh.

"From that time on I seemed able to think of but two things, the heavy clouds that were rolling up toward us, and that pock-marked grinning face.

"About four o'clock we reached the little village at the foot of the mountain where we were to change our comfortable jinrikishas for kagos. I had determined to say nothing to Mary about my distrust of the pock-marked coolie but as we stood together under a big paper umbrella waiting for our bags to be transferred, she slipped her hand through my arm and whispered:

" 'Have you noticed that awful looking—?'

" 'Hush,' I warned. 'Don't let him see that we are talking about him.'

" 'I wish we had not started,' she said. 'It 's going to storm, and we don't know where they are taking us.'

" 'Never mind,' I said. 'I guess they know their business.'

"Then we climbed into our small hammock-like seats, and curled our feet awkwardly under us, as the stout poles were lifted to the men's shoulders.

"The rain was coming down in sheets by this time, and as the road grew narrow and steep, the men's feet slipped on the winding path. Before long the storm broke over us in all its fury and we had to take refuge in a dense thicket. The thunder rolled closer and closer, and the lightning ripped the sky in every direction.

"Mary was so terrified that I begged the men to take us back down the mountain, but they either could not or would not understand, and only stood looking sheepishly at the pock-marked man who seemed to be the leader. He stood there grimacing at us foolishly while he wrung out the sweat rag that had been bound around his brow, and kept repeating: 'Aw right, Bimeby,' without making any move to do as we requested.

"When we got started again the woods were dark and wet, and the path at times almost impassable. The terrific rain had washed great boulders down from the mountain side and sometimes a fallen tree barred our passage. From under the light top of my kago I could see the straining muscles in the bare legs of the coolie in front and hear his panting breath.

"As it grew darker, we became more terrified for the men kept slipping and falling, and we had to stop again and again for them to rest. We tried to make them understand that we wanted to walk, that we would rather do anything than sit cramped any longer in those torturing kagos, lurched back and forth, and fearful every moment of being pitched out.

" 'It 's the mean one that won't let them put us down,' whispered Mary, during one of our pauses. 'And he is the one who would not let us go back.'

"Whatever sinister motive they may have had in pressing on, they certainly were not sparing themselves. I never saw such endurance nor such strength. The wind was beating

straight against them and the water streamed down the path over their feet, loosening rocks and sand as it came. First one man, then another, lost a sandal until they were all pounding along barefooted, panting, gasping, reeking with sweat, every muscle strained to its utmost.

"It must have been nearly six o'clock when, half exhausted, they put us down and pointed to a small shack by the roadside.

" 'Rest House!' gasped the pock-marked one, his chest heaving painfully.

" 'But there is no light!' I cried, 'there is no one there!'

"Two of the coolies pounded on the door and peered in at the windows but all was dark and deserted.

" 'What shall we do?' cried Mary in terror, her voice breaking in a sob.

" 'Stop crying!' I commanded almost roughly. 'We must get rid of these men if we have to pay them all that we have.'

"But to my surprise they asked for no more than we had bargained for, and after squatting on their heels for a time made ready to depart.

All but the pock-marked one. Again and again he circled the shack, coming back to hold heated argument with first one coolie, then another. From time to time he glanced at Mary, who was now crying unrestrainedly. I did not at all like the expression on his face.

"Our clothes, of course, were soaked with the rain, and our limbs so still we could scarcely stand, but I managed with what dignity I could command to make the coolies understand that they were to leave us at once and go back down the mountain. The only dissenting voice came from the evil-visaged leader. He evidently had other plans, which he set forth in voluble Japanese, with many gestures, and ever that recurring side look at my fair, disconsolate companion, still weeping on the steps of the shack.

"I was frightened but I was angry as well, and with no undecided voice or manner repeated my command for them to go and go at once. I even helped get the bags out of the extra kago to expedite matters.

"At last to my infinite relief they wearily shouldered their long poles, and the little pro-

cession started down the mountain. But as they turned the bend in the road, I saw the last pole-bearer look back over his shoulder, pause irresolutely, then reluctantly go on.

"I got Mary into the shack and slipped the big, rusty bolt, which was a travesty in connection with the sashless window. Then I looked about me. There was a cot with a dirty straw mattress, a table, two chairs, and a stove. The rain had beaten through the open window and the water still stood in puddles on the floor. I found a box of matches on the shelf and a piece of candle in a bottle, which I proceeded to light. In spite of the sultriness of the night Mary was shaking with cold and fear, and I made her lie down on the cot while I fussed about trying to find something dry in our bags to replace our soaked clothes.

" 'You are sure he went with the others?' she kept asking through her chattering teeth, and I did my best to reassure her and myself at the same time.

"I think we would have been less on edge if we had n't been so hungry. We had had noth-

ing since noon, and the long hard trip had worn us out. I found some tea in a can on the shelf where the matches were, but I was afraid to go outside to look for water.

"'You try to go to sleep,' I urged Mary. 'Doctor Woods may be here at any time now. I 'll call you the minute I hear him coming.'

"'But are n't you afraid?' she asked.

"'What of?' I answered so stoutly that she turned over and fell asleep like a comforted child.

"I never was a coward but I shiver even now when I recall that night. It was very dark and there were all sorts of strange disturbing noises in the wet woods without. The flickering light of the candle fell on the bare boards of the shack, and on Mary's white upturned face as she lay in exhausted sleep. Every now and then the trees scraped against the roof, and sometimes there came the long dismal wail of some strange animal out there in the rain-soaked darkness. With that preternatural sense of hearing that one develops while waiting for something in the night, I pricked my

ears at every new sound. Again and again I was sure I heard footsteps and once I was so confident Doctor Woods had arrived that I rushed to the door to meet him. But the silence that greeted me was so overpowering that I tip-toed back to my chair.

"I watched the hands of my watch creep from twelve to one, from one to two; then I folded my arms on the table and rested my head on them. I meant to stay so only a minute, but I must have dropped asleep, for the next thing I knew I was startled into consciousness by a slight noise, and, without lifting my head, I opened my eyes and stared stupidly ahead of me. Then all my faculties became suddenly alert. There on the window, gripping the sill, was a brown hand, from which the forefinger was missing. The next instant the hand disappeared and I was left watching the spot in fascinated horror.

"Never before or since have I known such abject terror as I knew at that moment! I was afraid to cry out or to keep still. I was afraid to wake Mary and afraid to face the danger

alone. I lay perfectly still, my eyes riveted on that black square which formed the window. I knew it was the only means of entrance as the door was bolted, and there was no exit from the rear.

"It was so still without that I might have persuaded myself I had dreamed the hand on the sill, had not every detail of it remained with me in hideous distinctness. The nails on the three fingers had looked almost white against the dark skin and the hideous enlarged knuckle above the missing finger had a long deep scratch across it.

"I scarcely dared to breathe. Over and over I lived the unspeakable tragedy which I thought was about to befall us. I gauged the distance to the window, and determined that I would fight with the chair in which I sat, using the legs as a sort of battering ram. Every muscle in me was taut, every nerve tingling, every sense alert, as I lay there immovable, watching through my half-closed eyes for the reappearance of the hand.

"The intolerable seconds dragged into min-

utes, the minutes into hours, and not a sound broke the stillness. My arms and legs grew numb, my eyes ached with the tension. It was as if an executioner stood over me with sword uplifted and failed to strike. Over and over I kept praying that Doctor Woods would come, and the man would not return, that Mary would not wake up, and every moment that my prayer was answered the suspense became more utterly unendurable.

"Just as the dawn was groping its way into the thicket, I heard a shout followed by the tramping of feet, then voices coming nearer and nearer, and a bluff English, 'Hello! Hello, there!'

"I sprang to my feet and shot the bolt of the door. But I did not get it open. The strain of the night had been too great and with a cry of relief I pitched over on my face in a dead faint. When I came to it was I who was on the cot and Mary and Doctor Woods were bending over me.

" 'You poor girls!' the good Doctor kept saying, 'I never dreamed you would come through

the storm. But my wife was anxious about you all night, and started me down the mountain as soon as it was light.'

"'But the man!' I whispered weakly, 'the coolie with the pock-marked face—'

"'Oh! Tomi?' said the Doctor, 'I found him sleeping across the door. He did n't want you to know he was there. He said you made him leave you last night, but that after he got back to the village he was so worried about you two girls being up here alone that he came all the way back to take care of you. It was a terrible climb for a man to make twice in one day, but Tomi said: "I no can rest when little white *Sensei* cry with her face in her hands."'

"I looked from the little white *Sensei* to the good Doctor, then I closed my eyes. Something very like shame swept over me as I realized how utterly I had misjudged the generous soul that dwelt in such an uncouth ugly body.

"I said no more of my experience to any one, but two months later when I opened a night school in Kyoto for men, Tomi was my first

pupil. I taught him to read and write English, and he became the head servant in the school.

"Some day when you come to Kyoto to see me, you will be met by a stooped old man with a very pock-marked face, but you will not be afraid. For Tomi can speak our language now, and he will tell you with pride that for thirty years he has been 'American Sensei's Number One Boy.'"

AARON HARWOOD

By Cale Young Rice

AARON HARWOOD

NO doubt Winfield meant to immortalize himself by painting a great marine, and Pine Neck was the point from which he expected to do it. The Neck is a square mile of land made by sand silting in behind a rough face of high rocks, and the Atlantic sweeps three sides of it. At the time Winfield fancied his masterpiece would be of a storm breaking over the fourth side, and incidentally over the native chimneys and numerous summer cottages which had already found foothold among the wild pines and junipers. What he could not have guessed was that he was to live for posterity not by any sea scene, but by his tragic portrait of an awkward young man, Aaron Harwood.

October was the month he usually chose for painting on the Neck, for then it was free of summer boarders and trippers. Sidelong glances across his easel always made him pro-

fane, and he knew that profanity, however marine, is not an aesthetic emotion.

The "natives," it is true, were often thus guilty; but he was struck with the fact that Aaron Harwood was not among them—and perversely enough was not flattered. Indeed it was this which first piqued, then interested him. Aaron, with a face grimly suggestive of New England, but with a shambling gait suggestive of otherwheres, would pass by so aloof from curiosity that Winfield's eye would be withdrawn from a wavebreak he had waited ten minutes to catch. Then, after the silent, grave, uncommunicative figure had gone, Winfield would find himself sitting for half an hour with idle brush and futile vision. There would be nothing for it but to pack up and go impotently back to his boarding place.

One October when this had happened a number of times and when the sea had been superlatively great and baffling, Winfield determined not to be outdone. He decided to take a small cottage facing the water at a fine angle and paint through the winter.

His other alternative, a season of New York's fads and frivolities, did not attract him. A long spell of loneliness, he thought, would be good for his art—though he was conscious of counting on more than solitude to put him right in that. There were hints of a tragedy behind Aaron's existence; and he told himself such a tragedy would be something humanly characteristic of the spot, which would enable him to really paint its sea.

He laid in, therefore, a full supply of books and wines, of cigars and food stuffs, and settling down meant to let winter freeze and blow as it hyperboreally willed. He meant also to entice Aaron and fathom him at first hand.

This was not so easy to achieve. Aaron's sheer irresponsiveness gave about as little opportunity to blandishments as a smooth cliff to a gull's nest. When that flannel-shirted, faltering young man was invited to enter the cottage he would stare at the ground and grimly but politely decline. If offered a cigar, when the two met and exchanged wisdom concerning the probability of an early winter, he would

reluctantly accept and pass on. Being a man of all work, he was once or twice persuaded to do odd jobs, such as putting up shelves for books, but having finished he would nod with gray inward-looking eyes, and be gone.

When winter really set in, however, Winfield was pleased to find that Aaron now and then made a way to his door to ask if he needed anything. Loneliness evidently had begun to oppress even him, and when urged to come in he would do so—careful first to shake the snow from his boots and cap. He would take a seat, always with his back toward the sea-window, and remark that the wind was high, or that more snow would be falling. Never, Winfield observed, would he look out on that infinite icy waste of waters.

One bitter day in December he knocked, and being bidden, came in. Winfield had tried all morning to portray something of the power with which those grey and green breakers dashed up over the slanting rocks,—but in vain. He felt that he might as well have tried to paint God the Father, so infinitely overwhelming was

their crash. Aaron's coming was, therefore, most welcome.

"Enter, Aaron!" he exclaimed cordially, laying aside brush and palette. "You 've arrived in time. This accursed sea 's impossible to paint and I was about to commit suicide. Sit down and we 'll smoke. The cigars are there by you."

At the word suicide Aaron had started; but he sat down slowly, and laid his cap on the floor beside him.

"It *is* accurst, Mr. Winfield," he said, with a strange bitter gloom that Winfield was too fretted with his morning's failure to notice. Then he added, awkwardly choosing a cigar, "Thank 'ee, sir."

Winfield tore off a match. "Well," he said, "if the sea 's not, *I* am. Look at that picture, now. You know the water's moods. I want to make waves dash up the High Rocks as you 've seen them a thousand times. Why can't I? What 's wrong?"

He turned the easel round so that Aaron might see. A sense of the ineptitude of the

work again struck him with such disgust that he was unaware, for a moment, that Aaron had risen with a look of loathing that seemed almost to suggest horror.

"I ain't wantin' to see any pictur' of it," the youth said, trembling violently; "and I ain't wantin' to see *it,* Mr. Winfield. I got to live here, but I wisht I was blind to it. I 'd ruther freeze in Alasky or burn in Africky!" he added in his strange dialect. Then, "Good-day, sir," he concluded abruptly, and, rising, started toward the door.

Winfield, taken by surprise was amazed, as Aaron may have felt. Or perhaps the latter's accustomed self-repression and gentleness may have quickly reasserted themselves. Anyhow he paused at the door and said crampedly, "You 'll excuse me, sir, but that sea—"

He was unable to finish, and stood there, with shoulders hanging, like one whom the mere words last spoken half-choked with dislike.

Winfield, who recovered speech, said very simply, "I 've blundered somehow, Aaron. But not intentionally, my boy, believe me. Come

back and sit down. Pardon; here 's my hand."

Aaron's lean throat gulped. He took the extended hand and again sat down.

Yet a change had come over him. It was as if his heart, long sealed up by silence and solitude, was relieved to find the seal broken. An irresistible desire for human sympathy—such a desire as will unexpectedly dissolve the reserve of the strongest—seemed to move in him.

"It 's me as should want pardon, Mr. Winfield," he said, the long habit of restraint giving way, "you could n't 'a' known, sir—"

He hesitated. But only for the right words.

To help him Winfield said quickly, "I know this, my lad, I 'm your friend." And that was now the full truth. Painting and a desire to get at Aaron for merely artistic purposes had dropped from him utterly.

For a space only wind and sea spoke. The cold thunder-crash of breakers beat against pane and shingle roof. Then as Aaron sat gazing into the fire, as into a crystal, hesitation left him.

"It ain't easy to explain, Mr. Winfield," he

began, "there 's words in my brain to do it, but I have n't used 'em for so long I won't be able to git more 'n a few poor ones out. . . .

"My bein' what I am has to do with my mother, mos'ly. She war n't from these parts, but from the Tennessee mountains—like her folks. She was ign'rant, too, like them, 'cept of house things an' a little readin' knowledge o' the Bible. She larnt that of a travellin' preacher. P'rhaps some would call her bad, too. For at twenty she give herself to one o' the mountain men, only bein' tokened by him to marry her when the nex' preacher come along. To me, howsomever, she was better 'n angels.

"She went away forty mile with this man, to his cabin. Durin' five months she did n't show no fears, sir, about not bein' married to him. She did n't complain, neither, though he was a hard-drinkin' man an' begun to treat her cruel. She waited, an' one day a preacher *did* come along. But the man who tokened her, an' he was my father though I don't know his name, said he 'd changed his mind an' did n't believe he cared to git married."

A dangerous angry glint in Aaron's eyes, as he uttered this, suddenly made Winfield know why his mother had never revealed his father's name.

"My mother did n't say nothin' after that," he continued, sitting down again. "She just went away one night to a city nearabouts. She was expectin' me to be born in three months an' wanted to lay by a little money.

"Well, she could n't get work, sir, that war n't too hard for her in her condition. But bein' able to read she kep' lookin' in the papers. Then one day what she was lookin' for come. 'T was a notice that read somethin' like this: '*Wanted: a good wife. Good home offered. Address Aaron Harwood, Pine Neck, Maine.*' "

Again Aaron got up, but a log on the fire broke in two and its scattering sparks relieved, for a moment, the tension which pronouncing the name he bore brought to his face. He kicked back the sparks and resumed, with a voice that fought the sea's:

"She wrote here tellin' her story 's well as

she could, an' sendin' a photograph. . . . She did n't hope at first, she told me in a letter she wrote for me to read when I was big enough. So when an answer come back namin' a bank in the city that would buy her a ticket to Pine Neck on reques', it seemed to her as if God His-self had leant out of Heaven to help her. Then an' there, believin' her baby would be a man-child, she named it—me—Aaron Harwood."

"Oh!" said Winfield with intense comprehension.

"Yes," Aaron nodded, "an' nex' day she took the train for here. She said it was like ridin' in a chariot of glory. He was to meet her, you see, sir, and marry her, though I had n't come yet. So she imagined he must be nigh like a saint. An' when she saw him 't was as if he had stepped out o' the Bible. He was tall, sir, an' had a long beard an' hooked nose; but with cruel eyes that bored like hot gimlets. That, howsomever, she did n't see; she was too nigh ready to fall down an' worship him.

"What *he* thought seein' her, ain't for me to say. What she told me he said was only,

'You 're her? Step along then. Time 's money.' An' he put her in the coach, his coach, that made the round to Portland.

"When they come to Pine Neck, where he kep' the store, an' post-office, an' barber shop, as 't is now, there was a preacher waitin'. They was married. Then my step-father, as was to be, said to her: 'You, now, git supper. There 's night work still to do round here.' "

"Good God!" said Winfield, grasping the scene. "He was that kind?"

Aaron looked up. The artist's eyes were fixed absorbedly on his face as if the story were transferring an image of it indelibly to his brain.

"He wanted a slave, sir, not a wife," Aaron answered with cold hate. "An' he got one. My mother believed, first, he was only kind of testin' her, to see if she was worthy. She worked hard, cookin' an' cleanin'. She larnt to take care o' the store. Then he bid her curry an' rake out the stable when the coach-driver was kep' away. Meantime he set by an' watched her.

"Then . . . one day when he was down to Portland . . . she slipt off to see the Ocean." Aaron choked as he told this, and hid his face in his hands. But immediately he straightened up and continued. "The store, sir, as you know, ain't in sight of it, an' she had been there six weeks without knowin' how it looked. An' as I was to be born soon she wanted to know afore I come.

"She took the short path you take, sir, through the young pines and birches, an' come out suddenly on the High Rocks. What she seen frighted her, she said; all that water poundin' there seemed to want to git at her. 'T was as if she had some forebodin', too. She just turned an' run away from it, back to home. There she fell on the bed . . . an' I was born in an hour, afore due time."

Winfield looking out on the breakers began dimly to foresee. From a decanter near he poured out wine—which Aaron refused—and drank.

"My step-father," Aaron resumed, "come home. When he saw her he said, 'So the brat 's

here? Well, you 'll have to work enough to make a livin' for the pair of you, till he 's big enough. After that I 'll see he don't wear no briches out idlin'.'

"Then my mother, sir, who had still hoped, saw he had n't wanted no wife, but only a unhired servant. It was hard 'tendin' to her work, an' me, an' the store. He 'd abuse her, too, if trade war n't good as might be. An' he 'd even hint that maybe she 'd pocketed some o' the cash.

"Soon, too, he made her take in the washin' of the summer boarders. An' in winter, when 't was desperate cold, he made her drive coach, 'stead o' him, if the driver could n't. She was feared at leavin' me with him. An' well so. For I recall how at four I 'd be set in a chair too far from the fire to keep warm, an' told I was a varmint, not his son; an' how if I did n't want to starve I 'd better larn to work soon 's I could. To-day, sir, whenever I 'm not workin' I git afeard—of him."

A pathetic, embittered pause. Winfield could not speak.

"Yes, sir," Aaron went on. "Then he got worse. Growin' older he wanted more work out of us. I fetched all the wood an' sawed it at nine. I had n't no chance for schoolin'; but milked the cow an' shovelled snow from the barn; and in summer done the errands to the cottages an' carried all the washin'. Mother done the rest, her work an' his'n—all but takin' care o' the money an' credits—an' the barberin' onct a week.

" 'T was too hard, an' she got tellin' me she kep' hearin' the sea, inside her head like, an' callin'. She had n't seen it since that day I was born—not for nine year. But she feared it as she feared him. Yet bein' as she feared nigh everythin' 'cept tryin' to stop him from beatin' me, an' bein' as I was little, I did n't understand.

"Then come the beginnin' o' the end, sir. She larnt, my mother did, to cut my hair, because he would n't do it. Then onct he got ailin' an' made her cut his'n an' shave him.

"She did it so easy like, it put an idea in him. He decided he would n't do the barberin'

no more on Saturdays, but have her do it. He pretended that, bein' as she was such a spry young woman, 't would bring trade."

"Not that, Aaron, surely!" broke from Winfield.

The pallor of humiliation on the young man's face was pitiful to see. Again he arose; but again sat down.

"She rebelled, Mr. Winfield, for the first time in them nine years. She would n't do it though he raved mightily. But he told her he 'd swear she fooled him an' married him without lettin' him know she was to have a brat. He told her that, an' said he 'd cast her an' me out o' his house . . . with bad names.

"When Saturday come she was broken. There was rough men in the shop—loggers from the river, an' hired men, an' niggers. She went in an' begun to shave 'em, while he stood round smilin' an' talkin'. The men just spit and winked.

"You can see, sir, I had to do somethin'. I had heard her refusin' an' sayin' 't would n't be decent; an' I understood. First I was kind

o' stunned with shame, an' did n't know what to do. Then 't was like a madness come on me. I determined as I 'd save her from the awful shame if I had to kill him."

"I see!" said Winfield fiercely. The tragic face before him was being burnt on his soul by every word.

Aaron, however, did n't hear. He was evidently living over again, like a somnambulist, that hour in his ninth year when he was willing to kill or be killed to save his mother from disgraceful humiliation. And as a shivering accompaniment to his thoughts rose the sound of the sea.

"I could n't stand it," he cried, "I could n't, Mr. Winfield. He stood there before the shop, lookin' in, tyrannical, while she shaved a drunken logger. I went to the stable an' got the pitch-fork. I meant to run him through.

"I come out in the sun, which was shinin'. There was tears in my eyes, an' at first I could n't see. I only knowed that his back was towards me, an' I had the pitch-fork. I did n't want to do it, but he stood there smilin' an'

sneerin' an' spittin' through his whiskers.

"As I catched the fork tight I saw my mother look out through the door at me. But I begun to run at him with the fork aimed at his spine.

"My mother, howsomever, guessed, sir, what I was goin' to do. She had n't never let me talk against him, but she knew. An' bein' afeard, she started so quick as to cut the neck o' the logger she was shavin'. She cried out, too, wantin' to stop me, an' my step-father seen her face, an' turned in time to dodge aside an' let the fork go into a pear tree.

"Then he seized me, sir, an' tore the fork out o' my hands, an' knocked me down. He turned nex' an' would 'a' rushed on her, but saw the logger, who war n't cut much, bleedin' an' swearin'. So he just stopped an' shook his fist at my mother an' said, 'Conspirin' to kill me, was you? An' you 've murdered another man tryin' to do it, have you? Wal, you 'll swing for this, you hell-witch.'

"I prayed, Mr. Winfield, I prayed to be able to git up an' he'p her. But I could n't. P'ralysis seemed to catch me. The logger was

bleedin' an' a look of mortal fear come into my mother's eyes. One of the men went for a doctor while she stood there with her hands twistin' under her apron, an' her teeth chatterin'. But I could n't move.

"Then sudden, sir, I saw her slip, furtive like, out of the shop, an' nex' minute out the back door an' along the path under the pines an' birches."

It was Winfield who rose now, sharply. He felt unable to endure what he foresaw coming. The sound of the sea was beating on the rocks like destiny.

"She begun to run, sir," Aaron continued with reverent restraint, "an' I was glad, 'cause I thought she was gettin' away out o' reach o' my step-father—an' the gallows. I laid right still.

"Then I begun to think she was takin' the wrong d'rection. She could n't git away runnin' *towards* the ocean. 'T was more frightenin' too, 'cause her look had n't been nachrul. An' I remembered how she 'd often told me the sea kep' callin' her. But I could n't think just

why I was so afeard. For you see, sir, I was only a little chip, scarce nine.

"'T was like lightnin' though, when the meanin' of her purpose come to me. It give me my limbs again, an' I got up an' begun runnin' after her an' callin'. 'Mother,' I said, 'Mother!' But she was too far ahead. She was nigh out o' sight in the pines. I tripped on a root, too, an' fell, an' got up cryin'. . . .

. . . . . .

"Tellin' more ain't no use, Mr. Winfield. I s'ppose you can guess now why I don't like the sea. At the High Rocks, when I got there, I could n't see her. When they took her out o' the water an hour later, an' brought her home, she had sea-weed clutched in her hands . . . an' she could n't speak to me, her little son.

"As for him, he went away from here. The neighbors rose up, you see; an' too, I think he feared I might kill him sometime. An' I 'm feared I might, if I should meet him somewheres, so I just stay. . . .

"Now I guess I better go," he ended after a long pause. And Winfield, who knew that

after so much speech his friend would want solitude, wrung his hand and led him to the door.

Aaron's image, however, remained after he was gone. Winfield, unable to banish it, again took up brush and palette. The sea was still breaking thunderously on the rocks, yet what he began to paint was not the water, but a face —that unforgettable face before which so many sink to a seat to-day in the city's great museum, and which seems to be the epitome of all tragic youth.

THE END